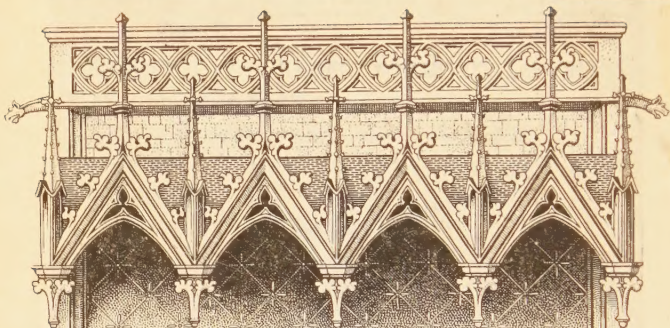




252 J  
5877



Presented by

Charles C. Haight, Esq.,


A portion of the Library of his father  
The Rev. Benjamin L. Haight, D.D.,  
Prof. of Pastoral Theology, 1841-55.

Library of the General  
Theological Seminary.

B. S. Haight,  
1893.







Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2025



# S E R M O N S

AND

C H A R G E S .

BY JAMES FREEMAN.

NEW EDITION.



BOSTON:  
CARTER, HENDÉE AND CO.  
1832.

H

32271

252J

F877

PRINTED BY I. R. BUTTS.

YANKEE  
BOY WASH



# CONTENTS.

---

## SERMON I.

Walking by Faith . . . . .	Page 1
----------------------------	-----------

## SERMON II.

Rules to be observed in examining the Evidences of the Christian Religion . . . . .	11
--	----

## SERMON III.

Character of a wise and amiable Woman . . . . .	21
---	----

## SERMON IV.

Old Age . . . . .	29
-------------------	----

## SERMON V.

Alms . . . . .	49
----------------	----

## SERMON VI.

Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace . . . . .	61
--	----

## SERMON VII.

The End of the Year . . . . .	85
-------------------------------	----

## SERMON VIII.

The Year and its Divisions . . . . .	100
--------------------------------------	-----

## SERMON IX.

What advantage have Christians above the Gentiles of ancient times? . . . . .	108
--	-----

## SERMON X.

The Marriage in Cana . . . . .	117
--------------------------------	-----

## SERMON XI.

God pardons penitent Sinners . . . . .	124
--	-----

## SERMON XII.

God regards the Poor . . . . .	133
--------------------------------	-----

## SERMON XIII.

The Joys and Sorrows of Mary . . . . .	142
--	-----

## SERMON XIV.

Candor . . . . .	158
------------------	-----

## SERMON XV.

The Enticement of Sinners . . . . .	182
-------------------------------------	-----

## SERMON XVI.

Irresolution . . . . .	191
------------------------	-----

## SERMON XVII.

The Tenderness of Jesus Christ . . . . .	201
--	-----

## SERMON XVIII.

The Immortality of Man the Consequence of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ . . . . .	211
--	-----

## SERMON XIX.

The Extent of Christ's Kingdom . . . . .	228
--	-----

## SERMON XX.

Fear of Punishment . . . . .	239
------------------------------	-----

## SERMON XXI.

Content . . . . .	254
-------------------	-----

## SERMON XXII.

Christianity began in the early part of the First Century	265
---	-----

## SERMON XXIII.

Christian principles render the Heart benevolent . . . . .	287
--	-----

## SERMON XXIV.

Necessity . . . . .	307
---------------------	-----

## SERMON XXV.

Summary of Duties . . . . .	314
-----------------------------	-----

## SERMON XXVI.

Duties of Citizens . . . . .	329
------------------------------	-----

## SERMON XXVII.

The Character of Judge Minot . . . . .	341
--	-----

## SERMON XXVIII.

The Character of Dr Howard . . . . .	362
--------------------------------------	-----

## SERMON XXIX.

Duties of a People to their Minister . . . . .	373
--	-----

## CHARGE I.

Delivered at the Ordination of Mr Cary . . . . .	385
--	-----

## CHARGE II.

Delivered at the Ordination of Mr Peirce . . . . .	395
--	-----

## CHARGE III.

Delivered at the Installation of Mr May . . . . .	405
---	-----

## APPENDIX.

A Homily of the Fourth Century . . . . .	419
Note to Homily . . . . .	428

ERRATA.

Page 156, line 12, read *her speechless*.

“ 266, line 8, from bottom, for had then begun. read *did not then begin*.

“ 317, last line, read *yourself*.



# S E R M O N I.

WALKING BY FAITH.

---

II COR. V. 7.

WE WALK BY FAITH, AND NOT BY SIGHT.

IN this chapter the Apostle is treating of the immortality of man. With great confidence, he expresses his hope of a future state of happiness. Nevertheless, he adds, we walk by faith, and not by sight. That is, this immortality is not a matter of knowledge, but of belief. We cannot demonstrate it, though we are firmly persuaded of its truth. The assertion of the Apostle is not applicable to a future state only ; but in almost all the doctrines of revealed religion, we walk by faith and not by sight. Absolute knowledge, in few cases, is granted to us ; what we believe may be probable, but it is not certain ; for here we see through a glass darkly, and know in part. In a future world we hope to enjoy perfect knowledge ; but the present world is in some measure a scene of obscurity.

As a consideration of this subject is adapted to make us cautious, humble, and candid, it deserves attention. At the same time, it is of importance to show that the prejudices, which are entertained against religion on this account, are ill-founded ; for if we walk by faith in reli-

gion, we are guided by the same light in almost everything else. We ought not therefore to object against revelation, because it cannot be demonstrated; for demonstration is not afforded us in other subjects.

Man, however, anxiously wishes for certainty in everything of importance; and when he does not possess it, is disposed to complain. Why has not God made what we are to believe so plain and evident, as that all doubts should be prevented? is a common inquiry. Why has he not revealed himself so clearly, as that we should be as certain of his existence as of our own? Why do we, not only believe, but know, that he is *one* being, who is infinitely powerful, wise, and good, the creator of heaven and earth, and the judge of men? Why are we not enabled absolutely to determine, whether Jesus Christ is a pre-existent being, or only a man? Why do we not certainly know, whether or not, he is an object of prayer? Why have we not more than probable evidence of the truth of Christianity? Why are men permitted to dispute about the meaning of its doctrines? Why is there such obscurity in the language of the sacred writers, as that controversies should exist concerning the trinity, the atonement of Christ, original sin, predestination, and everlasting punishment? Why do we not understand St Paul as well he understood himself? and why should it be possible that so many different explanations can be made of his words? In particular, why do we not know that we are immortal? Why have we not such evidence, as that it would be impossible to doubt of a future state? Why does not a ghost return from the other world, or a dead man rise, and make this important doctrine certain? We are frequently told, that we shall be punished hereafter for the deeds done in the body: we wish that we absolutely knew this; for certain knowledge would have

a greater influence on our conduct, than mere faith, however lively it may be. We have also heard that we shall meet our virtuous friends in a better state: If we were certain of this, we should see them die with more resignation.

Such language as this is natural to man. There are few of us, who have not felt it and spoken it in our hearts. In particular, when we have been inquiring after truth, when we have been disputing concerning any doctrine of revealed religion, when we have been defending Christianity against the objections of infidels, and have found how easy it is to involve the subject in obscurity, we have ardently wished that a voice from heaven, or some other proof, which might infallibly be depended on, would decide the controversy at once and remove every doubt.

May we not say, that the goodness of God would vouchsafe us the demonstration which we desire, if it was proper or possible? But he does not in fact; we live the life of faith, and not of knowledge: such is the constitution of things. Satisfied that whatever God does is right, I conceive that it is our duty, not to complain of this system, and to wish that it might be altered, but to endeavor to find out its reasons. Let us therefore inquire, why it is that God causes us to walk by faith and not by sight: after which let us attempt to show, that from this constitution of things advantages result, which we could not enjoy, if, in every case, we possessed absolute knowledge.

I. The most important doctrine of religion is, that there is one God of infinite perfection, by whose power we were created, by whose providence we are preserved,

whom therefore we are bound to love, to worship, and obey, and to whom we are accountable for all our conduct. This truth is proved by the strongest probable arguments, the evidence of which is nearly irresistible. It does not amount however to strict demonstration. There have been persons who have doubted of the being of God ; which shows that this truth is not as certain as mathematical propositions ; for no man can, or does doubt of them. Here then some may be ready to desire that the Supreme Being had revealed himself more fully ; so that we might not only rationally believe, but absolutely know, that he exists.

But it may be asked, how could this have been done ? As God is infinite, it is impossible that he should become the object of any one of our senses. We could not be made to see or feel *him*, who has neither parts, nor limits, nor form, nor color, nor motion. We see his works ; and he has given us understanding, by which, when it is properly directed, we are capable of discerning their contrivance, beauty, and harmony, and of perceiving that they must have an author of great power and wisdom. The visible world manifests to the well-tutored eye, that there is a God ; but so sublime an idea as that of a Deity would not of itself enter the uninstructed mind. On the contrary, it is probable that men are indebted for their first knowledge of this truth to a divine communication, or to a tradition, derived from this source. Revelation informs us that the world was produced by an intelligent cause. But revelation is not an object of knowledge, but of faith. Even then with respect to the being of a God, the most important of all truths, we walk by faith, and not by sight ; and it seems not possible that it could otherwise be.



We believe that God has made a revelation of himself in the sacred Scriptures, and that to them we are indebted for our notions of religious and moral truths. Now it is evident to any person, who attentively considers the nature of it, that it was not easy nor practicable to make it an object of knowledge. Revelation is contained in a certain number of books, all of them written near two thousand years since. The authority of the men, who delivered its doctrines, was confirmed by miracles, or evidences of supernatural power. Our acquaintance with these facts is derived from the testimony of the Apostles and others, whom we have reason to believe were intelligent, impartial, and sincere witnesses. They knew that what they declared was true; but it is impossible that we should know it in the same manner, or have anything more than a probable proof of it, unless God had continued a series of miracles from that age to the present, which would produce more bad than good effects.

These books were written by the authors of them, in the languages with which they were familiar; which, like all other human languages, are imperfect and contain words which are used in different senses, and abound with figurative modes of expression, the precise meaning of which cannot always be ascertained. These languages are unknown to us: and before we can read the Scriptures in our own tongues, we are obliged to procure translations of them, made by fallible and uninspired men. From these causes and others of the same kind, there are obscurities in these books; and the consequence is, that Christians of different sects do not understand all their doctrines in the same sense. We may add, that every part of the Scriptures is not equally clear. The preceptive parts are plain; but the opinions of the Apos-

tles and their reasonings are sometimes dark and hard to be understood. Perhaps also the first disciples, who immediately succeeded the Apostles, were not perfectly uniform in their ideas on points of less importance. They agree in their general doctrines : but it was not necessary that they should agree in every minute article of their creeds : and as they were men like ourselves, nothing short of a perpetual miracle could have produced this perfect unity of sentiment. Why then should we complain, that with respect to revelation we are obliged to walk by faith, and not by sight ? Is not this complaining that men are made as they are ? Is it not finding fault with the natural imperfection of the human understanding and requiring that God should change the constitution of things ?

An extensive inquiry into the nature of Christianity and a labored delineation of its evidences would show, that probability must be the foundation on which it rests. This task, however, would demand, not a single discourse, but volumes. The hints which I have given manifest, that it is vain to expect mathematical demonstration in so complicated an argument.

It may still be urged, that we have a right to require positive proof of the immortality of man. Here we ought to be indulged with the clearest sight ; because the doctrine, if true, is of the highest importance, as it is intimately connected with our virtue and happiness.

But let us not be hasty in requiring this proof. If man is immortal, it must be in consequence of the free gift of God. He has no right to demand immortality ; and there are few arguments from nature which lead him to expect it. On the supposition that there is in man a spiritual substance distinct from his body, how could its

existence be proved? For as it is not material, it cannot be made either visible or palpable. To require therefore that spirits should appear, to demonstrate to us the immortality of the soul, is demanding an impossibility. But if our immortality depends on the resurrection of the dead, our idea of it must be the same as that of revelation itself; it must be faith, and not sight. If we believe the New Testament to be the word of God, as we may rationally do, we can entertain no reasonable doubt of it; but as we cannot obtain absolute demonstration of the one, so neither can we strictly demonstrate the other.

II. These observations may show, that the constitution of things, by which we are made to walk by faith and not by sight, cannot easily be changed. There are advantages resulting from this system, which we could not enjoy, if, in every case, we possessed absolute knowledge.

One, — and it is of great importance, — is, that by the present constitution of things, the understanding is sharpened and improved, employment is found for the mind, and man is rendered active. If all truths were certain, man would lead a life of indolence. There would be an end of inquiry, of debate, of criticism; almost all the books in the world would be annihilated; and the learned professions would be extinct. In a word, we should have nothing to do but to open our eyes, and receive the light which was poured in upon them. Some persons may conceive that such a state would be better than the present. But they, who have this imagination, have never tasted the pleasure, which is derived from a minute examination of an intricate subject, in which knowledge is obtained and truth discovered by degrees. There is a

satisfaction, a self-complacence in exercising the reasoning powers, which permits us not to regret the want of absolute knowledge. When the judgment is employed in investigating our own ideas, in separating truth from falsehood, in exploding error, in deducing new truths from truths already believed, or even in probable conjecture, a delight is experienced, which would be altogether unknown, if every proposition was immediately clear and certain.

How pleasing is it, for example, to follow the arguments of such a noble and wonderful book as Butler's *Analogy*, and to trace the complicated evidences of Christianity in the profound works of the preachers at the Boylean Lectures! If the truths of the gospel were self-evident, the world would never have seen those learned apologies, which, in all ages, have done honor to the church, and which have so highly exalted the minds, not only of their authors, but of their readers.

Another advantage resulting from this constitution of things, is, that it furnishes us with an opportunity of exercising humility, candor, and forbearance.

As we walk by faith and not by sight, we ought to be modest in expressing our opinions. We ought not to assert anything too positively, as we may, notwithstanding all our inquiries, be in an error. We ought to keep our minds open to conviction, and to the reception of new ideas, however contrary they may be to the notions, which we have formerly entertained. Conscious of the imperfection of our knowledge, we should think, and reason, and act, with that caution, which becomes beings, who are absolutely certain of very few truths.

In consequence of this system, by which we are made



to walk by faith and not by sight, there is a variety of opinions among Christians. Almost all subjects can be viewed in different lights, and are attended with obscurities. This variety need not produce any ill effects; for as Christians agree in the essential point, the necessity of loving God and our neighbor, the interest of virtue is secure upon every system: but it affords an opportunity of displaying candor and forbearance. There is nothing more amiable than liberality and indulgence toward them, who differ from us in opinion. If we all believed exactly the same things, our benevolence would not be so meritorious; for we naturally love them, who resemble us; but to love them, whom we think erroneous, is generous, is charitable.

On the whole, from a view of the subject, it appears, that in religion, it is proper that we should walk by faith, and not by sight. But this system, whether it is right or wrong, is analogous to all the other dispensations of divine Providence. In nature, in government, in civil and domestic life, in agriculture, and in every kind of business, it is no less true, than in religion, that we walk by faith and not by sight. The statesman, who, with the experience and accumulated wisdom of preceding ages, forms a constitution of government, cannot promise himself more than a probability of success: he cannot certainly foresee what will be the effect of his plans. The parent, who, with the utmost care, educates his child, knows not that the instruction which he communicates will produce any good effect: he can only rationally hope, that his offspring will become intelligent and virtuous. The husbandman, who tills his fertile soil under an auspicious sun, is not certain, however probable it may be, that he

shall gather in the harvest. The merchant, who sends his ships to a foreign port, knows not, though chances may be greatly in his favor, that they will ever return. If the statesman, the parent, the husbandman, and the merchant ought not to complain because they walk by faith, and not by sight, ought the Christian to complain, because he walks in the same manner?

Though faith however is the light, by which we must guide our steps in the doctrines of religion, yet the duties of it are clear and certain. Whether our own opinions of Christianity are true or false, it is our duty to be pious and virtuous, to practise the precepts, which are contained in the gospel. These precepts are agreeable to nature and reason, and must be true, whatever our speculative system may be. Christianity, which teaches them, is supported by innumerable probable arguments. Let them who deny this assertion, examine the subject with care. In every step which they take, they will find proofs accumulating upon them, which they cannot easily resist; and they should acknowledge, that it is not less absurd to neglect their moral conduct, because they cannot demonstrate by irrefragable arguments a future state of rewards and punishments, than it is to neglect exertion in any other case, because they cannot positively answer for the success of their plans. Uncertain as events may be, sufficient motives present themselves to induce us to be virtuous; and if we refuse to attend to them, it cannot be allowed that we act with wisdom.

1st S. in Advent.

## SERMON II.

RULES TO BE OBSERVED IN EXAMINING THE EVIDENCES OF THE  
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

---

MATTH. XI. 3.

ART THOU HE THAT SHOULD COME?

WHETHER the Christian religion is a divine revelation, or the invention of man, is one of the most important questions, which can be offered to our consideration. This question has been agitated during many ages : but notwithstanding all the arguments, which the wise and the learned have been able to produce in favor of the gospel, there are still some persons, by whom it is disbelieved. It is not my design in this discourse to undertake the demonstration of its truth, but only to show with what disposition of mind its evidences ought to be examined. Accordingly I will offer several rules, which appear to be so clear and certain, that I think every rational man will assent to them, or at least to the greatest part of them, as soon as they are proposed. The example of John, the Baptist, who, with an honest and good heart, asked the question contained in the text, and who received from Jesus the satisfaction, which his candor and integrity deserved, confirms these rules, and is worthy of the imitation of all, who are inquiring into the truth of the Christian religion.

1. The first rule which I offer is, that the evidences of the Christian religion ought to be examined with seriousness. We are serious in considering any question, which is important, and where we think our interest is concerned. If we have a voyage to plan, a house to build, or an estate to purchase, we do not view the subject with a trifling mind or a superficial attention. We make use of foresight and precaution; and we are careful not to commit a mistake, or to form a false judgment. In discussing any political question, where we suppose the good of our country, or our personal freedom and welfare are concerned, we are equally serious. The affair is too momentous to leave our minds in vacancy and ease: and whether our object is to secure the election of a favorite candidate for office, or to promote any public measure, which in our opinion involves the independence and prosperity of our nation, our bosoms are filled with deep concern, and thoughts of levity are totally excluded. Now that religion is more important than any of the business of this world, is what no person of reflection will deny. If the Christian religion is true, we are immortal beings, and our happiness or misery in another state depends on our good or bad conduct in the state which now is. It behooves us therefore to examine the subject with care, and with all the solemnity and interest, which its magnitude demands.

The great enemy of seriousness is a propensity to ridicule, and too strong a love of wit and humor. These abuses proceed from the perversion of a part of our constitution, which our Maker has bestowed on us with a wise and benevolent design. As man is the noblest, so he is also the only risible animal, with which we are acquainted. God has given him tears to quench his grief, when his soul is burning with affliction; and smiles to

brighten his face, when his heart is merry. But it was never intended that his mirth should be a substitute for his reason, or that he should indulge himself in laughter, where the exercise of his judgment is required. Wit and humor are the amusements of life, and not the guides to knowledge. In the hands of a master, they may sometimes render a truth more striking, or a falsehood more glaring; but they are not arguments, though they are often found to make more impression on the minds of the superficial than the strongest demonstration. If these observations are just, it may be concluded, that nothing can be more false than the maxim which Shaftesbury has given, that ridicule is the test of truth. By ridicule we understand a jest, a mockery; or, to give a more favorable definition of the word, it is wit of that species, which provokes laughter. According to Shaftesbury then, nothing can be true, against which a laugh can be raised. Now experience shows, that a man of a sprightly imagination and ready invention can easily make anything appear ridiculous; and if we attend to the nature of wit, or rather to those kinds of it, which are denominated humor and ridicule, it will appear that the most important truths are not exempted from his power. The effect of ridicule is produced chiefly, if not altogether, by unexpected associations of terms. When words, which never met before, are suddenly brought together, there is produced a degree of surprise, which amuses the mind. The effect will be the most striking, when what is very high is associated with what is very low. The sublime truths of religion therefore can readily be turned into ridicule, by connecting them with mean and contemptible language. But a man of correct judgment, who wishes to discover the right path, will always

be on his guard against being diverted by this art. He will attend principally, not to the humor of the author whom he reads, or the speaker whom he hears, but to his arguments. I am sorry to say, that the writers against the Christian religion in modern times have generally followed the maxim of Shaftesbury. Of English deists not more than three or four can be named, who have treated the subject with seriousness ; and of French infidels there is scarcely one, who does not appear to be in jest throughout every part of his work.

2. A second rule is, that the evidences of the Christian religion ought to be examined with candor. Previous to inquiry, if we do not think well, we ought at least not to think ill, of the system. We should attend with pure and ingenuous minds to the arguments, which may be alleged on both sides of the question ; and determine to yield our assent, where the balance of proofs shall preponderate.

3. Connected with the second rule is a third, which I offer, that we ought to examine these evidences with impartiality. We should be equitable, indifferent, and unbiassed in our judgments. I do not say, that we ought to wish Christianity to be true, — for if we wished it, we should be partial, — but I say that we ought to be willing it should be true. It is difficult, I am sensible, to preserve a state of perfect indifference, in considering almost any question, which may be presented to our understandings. We are too apt to be inclined more to one side than the other, by our interests, our education, our habits, our prejudices, our vanity, our hopes, or our fears. Above all, in considering the great question of the truth of Christianity, our vices are opposed to im-

partiality. If the gospel is a fable, the wicked man has no evil to apprehend in another life : after he lies down in the grave, there will be an end to all his punishment. This consideration undoubtedly has an influence on the minds of some infidels, and prevents them from examining the subject with fairness and uprightness. I do not say to a man of this character, that he ought to believe the Christian religion ; but I assert that he ought to inquire, whether it is, or is not, entitled to his belief. If it is in fact a divine revelation, his ignorance of it may be pronounced wilful ; and consequently is no excuse for his sins. If a traveller is warned, that there is in the path before him a lion, which is seeking to devour him, every one will condemn his folly, if he walks toward him blind-folded : he ought at least to remove the bandage from his eyes, and see for himself, whether or not a false alarm has been given. In like manner every sinner ought to see for himself, whether or not the Christian religion, which threatens the wicked with destruction, is true ; for if it should prove to be the word of God, nothing can save him from ruin, except repentance and reformation.

4. A fourth rule is, that in examining the evidences of the Christian religion, we ought to consider it as it is in itself, without any of the false appendages, which have been made to it by the folly and superstition of its misjudging professors. Many objections, which have been deemed formidable, apply not to the gospel itself, but to its corruptions. Christianity may be true, though the doctrines of purgatory and transubstantiation are not true ; though it is not true that they, who differ in opinion from the majority, ought to be burned as heretics :



and though it is not true that the power of the clergy ought to be raised, as it was in the dark ages of the church, to such an enormous height, as to endanger the liberties of the people and the safety of empires. I instance in corruptions, which are foreign to our sentiments: but are there not among ourselves doctrines, which are no parts of divine revelation, and which prejudice against it enlightened understandings? An intelligent inquirer, before he rejects it, ought carefully to examine, whether the fact is not so; and whether there may not be sufficient reason to embrace the Christian religion, though he does not admit the absurd opinions, which have been maintained by its erroneous advocates.

5. A fifth rule, connected with the foregoing, is, that in examining the evidences of Christianity, we ought to view it, as it exists in the documents, in which it was originally delivered. I mean not that every man is under obligations to study the Greek and Hebrew languages. In the present improved state of knowledge, this study is unnecessary; because he can easily procure books, which will enable him to ascertain the genuine reading of the ancient text, as well as its true interpretation. The translations, which were made of the Scriptures two centuries ago, abound with errors; for Christians at that time were too full of prejudices, and were too much controlled by kingly and clerical authority, to be able to give a correct version; and yet, though these circumstances ought to be known by every man, who has any pretensions to learning, infidels have sometimes not been ashamed to deduce from such erroneous translations objections against the truth of divine revelation.

6. A sixth rule is, that in examining the evidences of the Christian religion, we ought not to reject it, because futile arguments have sometimes been alleged in its favor by weak writers. As all sorts of persons have undertaken to defend the truth of the gospel, it is not to be wondered at, that some of its professed advocates should have injured the cause, which they intended to benefit. But a system may be true, and may have a hundred strong arguments to support it, though injudicious authors may vainly add ten or a dozen feeble proofs; as an edifice may stand firm on its foundation of stone, though the wooden pilasters on its walls contribute nothing to its strength. When infidels triumphantly urge against Christians, Such a proof is worth nothing, provided it is really weak, they should reply, True, it is worth nothing: but there are, nevertheless, arguments, which are as hard as adamant, and which you cannot resist.

7. Finally, another rule is, that we ought not to satisfy ourselves with a superficial examination of the evidences of Christianity; because the arguments, which are supposed to establish its truth, are many in number and complicated in their nature. The leading proofs, which Christians allege in favor of their religion, may be summed up in a few words as follow: I. Prophecy. II. Miracles. III. The internal evidence, or the purity of its doctrines and the excellence of its precepts. IV. The unexampled perfection of the character of Jesus. V. The testimony of the Apostles and other primitive witnesses. VI. A chain of tradition, formed by the writings of a succession of authors, from the first to the

present century, and which establishes the authenticity and credibility of the books of the New Testament. These several arguments consist of a variety of parts, which afford each other support. To the evidences of the New Testament must be added the proofs of the Old Testament; because the two books are so intimately connected, that they must stand or fall together; for the Christian religion is a system, which professes to begin at the creation, and to be continued down to the restitution of all things. A knowledge of so many particulars cannot be obtained without careful inquiry and diligent investigation. As the evidences of Christianity are thus complicated in their nature, so the objections, which are alleged against it, are also multifarious; for there is scarcely any part of it, which has not been attacked by infidels. A man, who doubts of its truth, has therefore much to do; but he cannot be said to possess a pure and upright mind, unless he gives to every question relating to it the attention, which is due to its importance.

To these observations it may be objected, that if they are just, Christianity must be a system, which is not designed for the world in general; because the majority of mankind, and in particular the common people, have neither leisure nor capacity for such minute attention. I answer: It is not required of them. Experience manifests, that the greatest part of men are intended, not for speculation, but action. If the Christian religion is true, its practical effects, to the man who believes it, must be the same, whether he is able to demonstrate its truth, or not; as the mathematical tables, by which the navigator finds his way across the ocean, are equally safe guides, whether he does, or does not, understand their theory.

He is a good Christian, who practises the duties, which the gospel commands ; who educates his children in the principles of piety, temperance, and honesty ; who prays to God in his house, trusts in his mercy, and believes in Christ ; who on the seventh day joins the public worship of the church ; and during the rest of the week performs his part as a man, a citizen, a husband, and a father ; he is a good Christian, though he never reads any book except the Bible, and never heard of a deist or an atheist. But if by any cause he is led to speculate and doubt, he ought not to stop. A little learning will intoxicate his brain : to restore the sobriety of his mind, he must drink copious draughts from the fountain of theological science. If he reads the works of deistical writers, he must also read the best answers, which have been made to them : if he studies Hume, and Gibbon, and Paine, he must also study Campbell, and Watson, and Priestley.

In concluding the subject, I know not, whether I ought to give another rule, that to our diligence, seriousness, candor, and impartiality, we should add prayer to God. I hesitate, I say, whether to offer this rule, or not ; because the infidel may be unwilling to admit its propriety, as he must the justice of all the rest. But if he will not pray, he must at least wish, that the divine Being, who formed the human soul, and who is acquainted with all its motions, would enlighten his understanding, and guide it into the path of truth. If he has an honest and good heart, he must ardently desire to know, whether the gospel is a fiction, or the genuine word of God. You, my brethren, who already believe

the Christian religion, rejoice that you are perplexed with none of these doubts. You have a firm persuasion, that your heavenly Father hears your prayers; and that, as he bestows on you all necessary good things, so in particular he gives to you his holy spirit, when you ask for it with sincerity, humility, and devotion.

3d S. in Advent.

## SERMON III.

CHARACTER OF A WISE AND AMIABLE WOMAN.

ISAIAH XXX. 26.

THE LIGHT OF THE MOON SHALL BE AS THE LIGHT OF THE  
SUN.

THE contemplation of the various natural objects, which God has created, impresses this idea on the mind, that many of them are formed for beauty, as well as utility. Without regarding the advantages, which flow from them, they afford pleasure by their color, circular or undulating lines, or harmony of proportions. Of these natural objects, there are few which are more delightful, and there are none which excite more attention, than the gentle luminary, which extends its sway over the night: it charms both the eye and the fancy. Hence in all ages, the poet and the orator, who have written to the imaginations of men, have enriched their compositions with metaphors and comparisons derived from its reflected beams. The most elegant simile in the Iliad is one of this kind; and I need not point out instances in modern writers of beautiful imagery, which, like the rays of the globe from which they are borrowed, shed a mild lustre over their language and sentiments.

The text presents us with an agreable image, a light,

which is soft and gentle, like the moon ; but which, at the same time, without being dazzling to the eye, is constant like the sun. It has suggested to me the design of describing a character, to which it bears a resemblance.

Of human characters there is a great variety, both among women and among men. Of women, one has been compared to a flower, which is beautiful, but the bloom of which soon passes away. Another, says the great Cervantes, resembles a delicate vase of glass : it is free from a speck ; but wanting firmness, it is broken in pieces by the first stroke of temptation. One woman is like a temporary torrent, noisy and shallow ; while another resembles a perennial and silent fountain. Of men, one may be compared to a volcano, which hurls fire and destruction around. Another man stands immovable, like a lofty mountain : eternal ice chills his head, and sharp-pointed rocks and horrid precipices encompass his heart ; but he benefits the world by the mines of knowledge, which are contained in his bosom, or by the streams of science, which rush down from his summit. One man, like a meteor, with his intense flame, threatens to outshine all the stars in the sky, and to fill every soul with wonder ; but he blazes for a moment only, and then sinks into profound darkness. Another man, like the sun, with his genius enlightens the universe ; but so brilliant are his talents, and so powerful his rays, that he almost blinds the eye, which cannot follow him without pain, as he runs his rapid course from one end of the heavens to the other.

The character, which I undertake to describe, is of a different cast. It can be contemplated with ease and



satisfaction ; and whilst it is universally loved, it excites admiration without awe. This character belongs to a wise, discreet, and amiable woman. I will endeavor to make it a general character ; and will borrow its features from many excellent women, whom I have known ; from some, who are still alive ; and from others, who are numbered among the dead. My design in the delineation is to recommend certain virtues, and to censure the opposite vices.

The woman, whom I would exhibit to your view, possesses a sound understanding. She is virtuous, not from impulse, instinct, and a childish simplicity ; for she knows that evil exists, as well as good ; but she abhors the former, and resolutely chooses the latter. As she has carefully weighed the nature and consequences of her actions, her moral principles are fixed ; and she has deliberately formed a plan of life, to which she conscientiously adheres. Her character is her own ; her knowledge and virtues are original ; and are not the faint copies of another character. Convinced that the duty of every human being consists in performing well the part, which is assigned by divine Providence, she directs her principal attention to this object ; and whether as a wife, a mother, or the head of a family, she is always diligent and discreet. She is exempt from affectation, the folly of little minds. Far from her heart is the desire of acquiring a reputation, or of rendering herself interesting, by imbecilities and imperfections. Thus she is delicate, but not timid : she has too much good sense ever to be afraid where is no danger ; and she leaves the affectation of terror to women, who, from the want of a correct education, are ignorant of what is truly becoming. She is still further removed from the affectation of sensibility :

she has sympathy and tears for the calamities of her friends ; but there is no artificial whining on her tongue ; nor does she ever manifest more grief than she really feels. In so enlightened an understanding humility appears with peculiar grace. Every wise woman must be humble ; because every wise woman must know, that no human being has anything to be proud of. The gifts, which she possesses, she has received : she cannot therefore glory in them, as if they were of her own creation. There is no ostentation in any part of her behaviour : she does not affect to conceal her virtues and talents, but she never ambitiously displays them. She is still more pleasingly adorned with the graces of mildness and gentleness. Her manners are placid, the tones of her voice are sweet, and her eye benignant ; because her heart is meek and kind. From the combination of these virtues arises that general effect, which is denominated loveliness, a quality, which renders her the object of the complacency of all her friends, and the delight of every one who approaches her. Believing that she was born, not for herself only, but for others, she endeavors to communicate happiness to all who are around her, in particular to her intimate connexions. Her children, those immortal beings, who are committed to her care, that they may be formed to knowledge and virtue, are the principal objects of her attention. She sows in their minds the seeds of piety and goodness ; she waters them with the dew of heavenly instruction ; and she eradicates every weed of evil, as soon as it appears. Thus does she benefit the church, her country, and the world, by training up sincere Christians, useful citizens, and good men. It is scarcely necessary to observe, that with so benevolent a heart, she remembers the poor, and that

she affords them, not only pity, but substantial relief. As she is a wise woman, who is not afraid to exercise her understanding, her experience and observation soon convince her, that the world, though it abounds with pleasures, is not an unmingled state of enjoyment. While therefore she is careful to bring no misfortunes on herself by imprudence, folly, and extravagance, she looks with a calm and steady eye on the unavoidable afflictions, through which she is doomed to pass; and she arms her mind with fortitude, that she may endure with resolution and cheerfulness the severest trials. When sickness and distress at last come, she submits to them with patience and resignation. A peevish complaint does not escape from her lips: nor does she murmur, because the hand of her heavenly Father lies heavy upon her. She is, if possible, more serene, more mild, more gentle, on the bed of disease, than she was in the seasons of health and felicity. So affectionate is she to her surrounding friends, and so grateful for the attentions, which they pay to her, that they almost forget, that she suffers any pain. The love of God crowns all her virtues: religion is deeply fixed in her heart; but here, as in all her behaviour, she is without parade. Her piety is sincere and ardent, but humble and retired. She attends only to the essentials of religion, and leaves doubtful controversies to angry theologians, who more highly value the doctrines of their particular creeds, by which they are distinguished from other men, than the duties of the gospel, which belong to all Christians. A mind, in which strength and gentleness are thus united, may be compared to the soft light of the moon, which shines with the perpetual rays of the sun. We are at first view ready to imagine that it is more lovely than great, more charming

than dignified ; but we soon become convinced, that it is filled with true wisdom, and endowed with noble purposes.

Such a character can be formed nowhere but in a civilized country, and in a country which is blessed with the light of the gospel. Among savage nations women are the slaves of the stronger sex ; among the ancient heathen they were subjected to disgraceful tyranny ; and in the present age, among nations, who are unacquainted with the Christian religion, they are deprived of personal freedom, and are nothing more than beautiful birds confined in cages. Whatever reason, therefore, men may think they have for wishing, that the arts of civilization were lost, or that the licentiousness of paganism would return, women would lose everything by such a change. The religion of Jesus is of infinite importance to women ; and it should be precious in their eyes, and dear to their hearts. If men therefore, puffed up with the pride of skeptical philosophy, dispute the pretensions of its author, let not women, whose refined sensibility frequently leads them directly to truth, refuse to admit his claims : if men will not have the Prince of peace to reign over them, let women cheerfully submit to his rightful dominion. The Christian religion restores to women all their rights, and establishes their equality with man in everything which is valuable. From the dishonorable condition of being one slave among many of the same haughty lord, it raises them to the rank of being the single companion, and the only complete and perpetual friend of their husbands ; of being equal sharers with them in the same property and privileges, in the same labors and cares, in the same sorrows and joys. It confers on them the right of being

the children of the same God, the disciples of the same Master, and the heirs of the same salvation. They should therefore adhere to it as the charter of their freedom, which not only makes them good, but which also renders them happy. The Christian religion refines and ennobles all who receive it : but it is in particular adapted to the character and habits of the female sex. Women are, almost by nature, humble, gentle, pure, faithful, affectionate, and compassionate, and more distinguished for passive, than active courage : and these are the virtues, which the gospel everywhere enjoins. It lays no stress on the false virtues, which are supposed to adorn savages and pagans ; on no virtue, which is merely masculine, but on those virtues only, which can be performed by every human being.

During the course of my life, I have seen many instances of the triumphs of this divine religion in the female heart ; and I doubt not, my brethren, that I express sentiments, which you feel, when I say, you rejoice in having passed your days among Christian women. You remember with pleasure and gratitude the affection, which watched over your infancy ; the tender solicitude, which guided your youth ; and the conversation which has charmed, the friendship which has blessed, and the many virtues which have edified, your riper years. These pleasing recollections are however imbittered with the thought, that many excellent women, whom you have known, and esteemed, and loved, now sleep in the grave. If there was not a future state of happiness, you could with difficulty support their loss : but whilst as Christians you believe, that the precious remains, which have been committed to the dust, will again be animated with life, and restored to bliss, you can with reason indulge the

hope, that you shall see them again, not shining, as on earth, with feeble and reflected light ; but when, in a more emphatical meaning of the text, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days ; when the ransomed of the Lord shall come to the holy mountain with songs and everlasting joy on their heads ; when they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

4th S. in Advent.

## S E R M O N I V .

OLD AGE.

---

PSALMS XCII. 14.

THEY SHALL STILL BRING FORTH FRUIT IN OLD AGE.

IF we expand the metaphor of the text into a simile, we may say, that the Psalmist compares human life to a fruit tree, which exhibits different appearances, as it is variously affected by the progressive seasons of the year. As the tree in spring produces blossoms, which become fruit in summer, and ripe fruit in autumn: so man, in his childhood, which resembles spring, brings forth the beautiful flowers of promise; in his youth, which resembles summer, the fruits of wisdom and virtue are beginning to be formed, and every day gradually increase in size; in his manhood, which resembles autumn, his intellectual and moral character is ripe, and he now gathers the reward of his labors. When we arrive at winter, the comparison no longer runs parallel; for the tree brings forth neither blossoms nor fruit in December; while in old age, which, as it is the last and coldest period of life, in some points resembles it, fruit may still be produced; the fruit of happiness, and the fruit of duty. We are now in the midst of the shortest days of the year: no subject therefore appears to be more proper



for the season than old age, the winter of life. It is my intention, first, to show that long life, which must of necessity terminate in old age, is a blessing; and secondly, to mention several duties, which become the aged.

I. Long life is a blessing. The blessings which we most ardently desire are long life, riches, and health. Without health all other enjoyments would be of little value. Riches are desired for the sake of enabling us to procure every other pleasure; for he who has wealth, it is supposed, can purchase with it whatever is necessary to his happiness. But even health and riches would not be much prized, if they were to be of short continuance. It is therefore our fervent prayer, May I be blessed with a long life! However disposed we may sometimes be to inveigh against the world, we are willing to remain in it; and however prone to consider life as full of evil, we quit it with regret. Though we are too ready on every occasion peevishly to quarrel with it, yet we still cherish it, like an old friend whom we fondly love. That these are the sentiments of nature, your own feelings, my brethren, will confirm: and in this light is long life represented in the ancient scriptures. When the happiness of a favorite of heaven is described in the Old Testament, this particular blessing is enumerated among the others which he possessed. Thus does Moses speak of the founder of the Jewish nation, a man who was distinguished for the felicity of his life: Abraham, says he, died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years. This reward also was one of the most eminent, by which God incited his people to obey his commands: Honor thy father and mother, that thy days may be long in the land. The like reward was

annexed to many other precepts : for the Mosaic religion, as has been often observed, was founded principally, if not altogether, on temporal promises. In the Old Testament, it is true, there are many complaints of the vanity and misery of the world : but still it seems to be a conceded point, that life is a favor, and consequently that a long life is to be wished for and thankfully received. You, my brethren, who have reached the period of old age, ought therefore to acknowledge the goodness of God : and you, who enjoy the happiness of having a beloved friend continued with you for many years, ought to be grateful to Heaven.

The natural age of man is said by the best writers on the human frame to be about ninety years : that is, a man of a robust constitution, whose life was passed in temperance, and without disease, would, if no dangerous accident intervened, attain this period, and then die of old age. In this country we see many instances of persons, who reach the term and even beyond it ; which demonstrates that the observation is founded on experience. But human life is subject to so many maladies, that the Psalmist has thought proper to fix the period of it to seventy, or at furthest to eighty years. We generally consider a person as having been favored with long life who dies at the age of seventy, though it is evidently far short of the natural age of man.

In asserting that long life is a blessing, it must, as I have suggested, be taken for granted, that life in general has a balance of enjoyments in its favor. But of this fact there cannot be much doubt. There are, it is true, in the world many positive evils, which, as they are the constant topics of declamation, I need not enumerate. Beside which it must be allowed, that amidst the most

flourishing external prosperity, the heart of man is never fully satisfied. What he possesses never answers his expectations ; and there is always something wanting which he cannot obtain. No person of experience therefore will assert, that man is or can be completely happy in this world : and they who are disposed to turn their attention too much on themselves, and who refine with a morbid kind of sensibility on the nature of human felicity, will be apt to believe that misery greatly preponderates. But excepting them, who preposterously lay every nerve bare to the touch of pain, the human race have not much to complain of. God has so benevolently constructed both the natural and moral world, that there are innumerable sources of happiness. Our senses are the inlets of pleasure ; and our minds, a vast magazine of enjoyment. Now I say that these enjoyments are not confined to youth, but that old age is admitted to its share. The senses may be in some degree blunted by age ; but their sensibility is not destroyed. The taste, smell, and touch are still gratified with the objects adapted to them ; melodious sounds still charm the ear ; and brilliant, beautiful, picturesque, and sublime objects still delight the eye. Intellectual pleasures of the more refined species are perhaps increased, as we advance in years. For it is the nature of man, when his powers are rightly improved, to begin with matter, and to end with spirit. Knowledge, where industry is continued, and the faculties are not impaired, though many things are forgotten which were learned in youth, must be gradually enlarged till the close of life. The same thing is true of virtue ; for like all other habits, it must become more and more confirmed by repeated acts. Children are innocent ; but they cannot properly speaking be

styled virtuous: they are all body, and all their wishes and enjoyments terminate in themselves. By proper instructions and examples they may indeed be gradually led to the acquisition of benevolence: but the habit cannot be considered as fixed, nor man as out of danger of relapsing into selfishness, till the period of youth is in some measure passed, and the fever of passion and appetite is abated. In old age the character is settled on a firm basis: and the enlightened and good man is then reaping the fruits of his exertions. In this view therefore a long life must be regarded as a distinguished blessing.

If we look around among our acquaintance, we shall find these observations confirmed by experience: we shall perceive many old persons, whose days flow on with much satisfaction, and who at the age of seventy, and even eighty years, are pleasant companions, instructive friends, and useful members of society. In conversing with them, we are reading the chronicles of other times: and it is pleasant to listen to their recital of past events, and to receive the counsels of their wisdom and experience.

The young, who all wish to live, but who at the same time have a dread at growing old, may not be disposed to allow the justice of this representation. They regard old age as a dreary season, which admits of nothing which can be called pleasure, and very little which deserves the name even of comfort. They look forward to it, as in autumn we anticipate the approach of winter; but winter, though it terrifies us at a distance, has nothing very formidable, when it arrives. Its enjoyments are of a different kind; but we find it not less pleasant than any other season of the year. In like manner old age,

frightful as it may be to the young, who view it far off, has no terror to them who see it near ; but experience proves that it abounds with consolations, and even delights. We should look therefore with pleasure on many old men, whose illuminated faces and hoary heads resemble one of those pleasant days in winter, so common in this climate, when a bright sun darts its beams on a pure field of snow. The beauty of spring, the splendor of summer, and the glory of autumn are gone ; but the prospect is still lively and cheerful.

Among other circumstances which contribute to the satisfaction of this period of life, is the respect with which old age is treated. There are, it must be acknowledged and lamented, some foolish and ill-educated young persons, who do not pay that veneration which is due to the hoary head ; but these examples are not numerous. The world in general bows down to age, gives it precedence, and listens with deference to its opinions. Old age wants accommodations ; and it must in justice to men be allowed that they are afforded with cheerfulness. Who can deny that such reverence is soothing to the human mind ? and that it compensates us for the loss of many pleasures which are peculiar to youth ?

The respect of the world in general is gratifying ; but the respect of a man's own offspring must yield heartfelt delight. Can there be a more pleasing sight, than a venerable old man surrounded by his children and grandchildren, all of whom are emulous of each other in testifying their homage and affection ! His children, proud of their honored father, strive who shall treat him with the most attention, while his grandchildren hang on his neck, entertain him with their innocent prattle, and

convince him that they love their grandfather even more than they love their father. After viewing such a scene, can we possibly believe that it is not a blessing to live long? and yet no spectacle is more common.

God has so constituted our nature, that we are made happy, not by loving ourselves, but by loving others: In proportion as we diffuse our affection, our bliss increases: but the virtuous old man generally enjoys this blessing. His life, his affections, and his sympathies are augmented by every child who descends from him. Is not his complacence as great as it is rational, when he surveys his offspring, and sees that they do credit to the pains, which he bestowed on their education; that their heads are adorned with knowledge, and their hearts warmed with religion and virtue? How many instances however of aged parents could we mention, who feel this satisfaction!

Again, a long life is a blessing, because it enables a man to perform much for the good of society. Genius, knowledge, and industry, under the guidance of wisdom and philanthropy, may greatly promote the welfare of mankind; but even they can effect little, unless aided by time. How few things can be done in a life, which is confined within the narrow limits of thirty or forty years! A man may indeed then begin many excellent plans; but he cannot have opportunity to execute much. For the former part of life must be principally spent in study, and in laborious attempts to acquire the knowledge and habits, the effects of which are afterwards to be displayed. Granting therefore, what is probably true, that the understanding of a man is ripe at thirty, and that after that period he no longer improves with the same rapidity as in youth; yet many years of unremitted

exertion will be necessary to execute any great and extensive plan, or to complete any work which will benefit the world. Accordingly we find, that those authors, whose writings have contributed most to enlighten and improve mankind, have commonly been favored with a long life. How many examples of this might be produced. Among others which occur to my recollection, I would mention only one, that of the celebrated Dr Lardner, who at the age of forty began his *Credibility of the Gospel History*, the most learned, liberal, and comprehensive demonstration of the Christian religion which appeared in the last century, and prosecuted it to the day of his death, which took place in the eighty-fifth year of his age; nor was this long period quite sufficient to complete his extensive plans. I cannot forbear considering it as a peculiar instance of the goodness of God, that he has lengthened out the lives of eminent men, whose labors have been useful to the world in general, and to the Christian church in particular. I would not confine this observation to authors. It is equally applicable to statesmen and judges, of some of whom it may be truly said, that their length of days has been a blessing to the public.

Finally, a long life may be viewed as a distinguished blessing, as it is frequently the effect and the reward of virtue. Under the Mosaic economy it was promised to them, who obeyed the commands of God; and it is generally supposed that it was bestowed as a positive recompense. I presume not to say, that any favor of this kind can be expected under the Christian dispensation. I only affirm, that a long life is the reward of virtue, as it is its natural effect. That length of days is in the right hand of wisdom, by which Solomon meant such



good conduct as wisdom dictates, is as true now as it ever was. Not that every act of virtue has this tendency. Some may even bring on a premature death; and must expect their recompense, not in this world, but the other. It must be granted also, that many amiable persons die at an early age, while the lives of the wicked are spared. But it is still true, that cleanliness and early rising, industry, temperance, and chastity, cheerfulness, good temper, and the government of the passions, all of which are either acts of virtue or closely allied to it, naturally tend to prolong life. On the other hand, it is equally true, that the opposite vices, filthiness, sloth, drunkenness, gluttony, and debauchery, fretfulness, ill temper, and ungovernable passions, sink a man into an untimely grave. Ungodly and wicked men do not live out half their days. They wantonly destroy their bodies as well as their minds, and bring on disease, imbecility, and finally death. There is indeed a great natural difference in the constitutions of men; but even a feeble frame may be preserved many years by attention, moderation, and purity of morals. Daily experience confirms the truth of these observations; so that there is no rashness in affirming, that a long life is in some measure in our own power; and, on the contrary, that many who are cut off before they reach old age, may be properly said to die by their own hands.

II. Upon the whole we may infer from the remarks which have been made, that a long life is a blessing, and that old age, the last stage of it, is not so gloomy a season as it has sometimes been represented, as it enjoys many comforts, and even pleasures. It may be concluded from this fact, that the aged have duties to

perform ; some of which I would now lay before you in the second part of my discourse.

1. The aged should conduct themselves with suitable gravity, and not fall below the dignity of behaviour, becoming the period of life, which they have attained. It is not decent in the old to retain the levity and thoughtlessness of the young, and to indulge in vices, for which youth itself is not an excuse. It is time to be done with voluptuousness, with the loose joke, with gaming, with dissipation of every kind. These things are not only criminal, as they always were ; but they are now exceedingly shameful. They may be pardoned in youth by them, who entertain false ideas of the force of the appetites ; but in age they are pardoned by no one ; in particular, not by the young, among whom old men lose all respect, and are the objects of contempt and derision, when they still linger within the precincts of licentiousness.

2. But while the aged avoid their vices, they should be cautious of censuring the young. On the contrary they should be kind and indulgent, and not fall into a mistake common to old men, many of whom believe and maintain, that the former times were better than the present. The manners and the morals of men are different at different periods. It must be granted that one age of the world is comparatively innocent ; and that another is very corrupt, such as the abominable age which preceded the Reformation of Luther, and the still worse age which preceded the revelation of the Christian religion ; but there is no reason for thinking that the present times, in this country at least, are remarkably bad. It is diffi-

cult, I am aware, to make a just estimate : because the knowledge of any individual must be limited : but as far as I know, there were formerly more love of mischief, more licentiousness, and more profaneness, than there are now. We are apt to view the sins of the young, when age has removed us at a distance from them, as men, who live in the country, view the sins of large cities. They, who are unaccustomed to the bustle of men, imagine that every great town is a place of temptation and wickedness ; but they, who dwell in the capital, know that one half of the reports, which are raised against them, are not true. There is comparatively as much honor, generosity, freedom from slander, purity of behaviour, holiness, and religion, in the city, as in the country. A similar remark applies to the present times ; and the reason is the same in both cases ; for as men grow more refined, provided their refinement is not carried too far, decorum, modesty, and other virtues of the same class prevail. I will not say that the present morals are more pure ; but they are certainly more decent, than the morals of the last century. That so many public speakers should assert the contrary, is not to be wondered at ; because this exaggeration, like other exaggerations, enables them to be more eloquent : but while they inveigh against the present times, and gain applause from their admiring hearers for the fire and strength of their satirical language, let not the experienced and wise old man join in these invectives ; because he must know, that his sons are probably as correct and moral, as he was at their age. Let him maintain, what he feels every day to be true, that the sun does not shine as brightly, that the zephyrs are not as bland, that the peach is not as sweet, and that the face

of the earth is not as novel and charming, as it was in his youth : but let him confess at the same time, that the change is not in surrounding objects, but in himself ; that human nature is not deteriorated ; that there is as much as there ever was of chastity and truth, of filial gratitude and reverence, of tenderness and goodness, of charity and devotion.

3. They, who are advancing in age, should take pains to prevent the love of the world from increasing in their hearts. As this sin easily besets them, they have here need of all their caution. A man, who has lived a half century of years, must be fully convinced of the folly of extravagance. His own experience and his observation on the fate of others must prove to him, that property, when it has once been lost by sloth, neglect, or dissipation, can seldom be recovered. He sees too, that even care and prudence sometimes do not avail him ; and that he who is the most firmly established in wealth, is not secure against a reverse of fortune ; but that riches, after they have long perched on the mansion of prosperity, suddenly take wing, and leave the old man to consume the remainder of his days in poverty and dependence. It is not surprising therefore, that the fear of coming to want should sometimes enter the bosoms of them, who have heaped up silver and gold. But anxiety is as useless in this case, as it is in all others ; and for this plain reason, that it cannot shield us against the apprehended evil. Prudence and foresight, when they are extended beyond proper bounds, deprive us of the very advantages, which we hope to derive from wealth, that is, of ease and independence ; and it can make no difference to a man, whether he is wretched

because he is poor, or because he fears he shall be poor ; it can make no difference to him, whether he wants the comforts of life, because he cannot, or because he will not, purchase them. To the truth of these remarks most men will assent ; for there is no character so much condemned as a mere miser ; but men, without being misers, may still be too fond of the world. An old man is too fond of it, when he is willing to spend his wealth, but chooses to spend it on himself only. He loves this world too well, when he forgets that there is another : he loves it too well, when he is not rich in good works ; when he gives nothing to the poor ; when he hardens his heart and stops his ears at the cry of the needy.

4. While the old man with resolution and fortitude defends his mind against the inroads of covetousness, he should continue in the practice of industry ; and it is generally proper that he should pursue some employment even to the close of life. He should be industrious for the sake of others ; because while health and reason remain, it must always be in his power to benefit society : and he should be industrious for his own sake ; because if he is not, he will fall a prey to discontent. There have been so many proofs of it, that there can now be no doubt of this truth, that the man who retires completely from business, who is resolved to do nothing but enjoy himself, never attains the end, at which he aims. If it is not mixed with other ingredients, no cup is so insipid and at the same time so unhealthy, as the cup of pleasure. When the whole employment of the day is to eat, and drink, and sleep, and talk, and visit, life becomes a burden too heavy to be supported by a feeble old man ; and he soon sinks into the arms of

spleen, or falls into the jaws of death. Not satisfied with barely showing that he is alive, the old man should endeavor to make himself as useful as possible. If he moves in a large sphere, he should engage in schemes for the good of society and posterity, by promoting commerce, agriculture, manufactures, the comforts of the poor, the accommodations of his fellow-citizens, the support of good government, and the interests of learning and religion. If he is confined within narrow limits, he should still do a little toward the maintenance of himself and family, and by his words and good example instruct his children and grandchildren in the principles of virtue and piety. Those old men have great reason to reproach themselves, who have passed their lives, and continue to pass them, merely in consuming the fruits of the earth, without adding anything to its productions ; who have neither ploughed the land, nor sailed on the sea ; have not planted trees, written books, nor educated children ; have neither preached the gospel, pleaded the cause of the oppressed, nor healed the sick ; have neither framed, judged of, nor executed the laws. Such idle persons are of little use to the world ; when they die, they leave no vacancy in society ; and long before their flesh is turned to dust, the memory of them is forgotten.

The old man then should continue to work either with his body or mind, as long as strength remains : it cannot however be expected of him, that he should make the same spirited exertions as in youth. He will become less and less active, as his limbs stiffen with age ; and he will retire still further from the eyes of the world, as the shades of evening approach. Those employments, which require quickness of sight and hearing, melody of speech, and brilliancy of imagination, should

be resigned, after age has disqualified him for filling them any longer with reputation to himself and advantage to the community. He should leave them to men, who are in the vigor of their days; not only because they will perform the duties of them in a better manner, but because it is proper that every generation should enjoy its share of public honors. We commend therefore the resolution of those men, who at a certain age have voluntarily divested themselves of the splendid trappings of office, and have confined their worldly business to the cultivation of their farms, or the care of their estates.

Old men should in particular be industrious in the pursuit of knowledge; for if they are not, they will forget much of what they learned in youth. Time is incessantly employed in erasing the impressions, which have been made on the memory; and unless they are stamped again and again, not a few of them will be lost. The aged should not only endeavor to preserve the knowledge, which they formerly acquired; but they should also open their understandings for the reception of new ideas. By the improvements, which from year to year are made in the arts and sciences, every present generation grows wiser than the last. As there is more knowledge in the world, and easier ways of obtaining it, the old man must study, or the young will soon get beyond his sight; the old man must study, or he will in time become unfit for conversation, for business, and for society.

5. An odious temper, against which the old man should guard himself, is obstinacy in prejudice and the want of candor. It is the nature of all bad habits, to grow more inveterate by time; because every repetition



increases their strength : bigotry therefore becomes more furious, the longer it is indulged ; but happily a mild and candid disposition can be obtained as easily as the opposite vice. With proper attention and care, age renders the mind less bigoted in opinion, and less tenacious of disputable points. He who has been accustomed to reflection, and who has frequently heard the many objections, which, with plausibility or truth, may be urged against his own sentiments, will at last be convinced, that many propositions are probable, but that few are certain. He will learn, that when he has given up what cannot be defended in his own creed, and others have surrendered what cannot be defended in theirs, he gradually comes nearer to those Christians, whose conceptions at first were the most diverse from his own. He will perceive too, that a dogmatical spirit ill becomes any man, whose understanding is enlightened : that it may be excusable in the young, who have not had time to weigh all the difficulties, and opportunity to hear all the objections, which may be made against their opinions ; but that it is dishonorable in the aged ; because experience must have long ago evinced, that they, who have taken a different route in the pursuit of truth, are as wise and honest as themselves. Many examples prove, that age produces this effect on an inquiring and good heart : it breaks down the sharp points, with which their minds were hedged round ; and while it does not divest them of their love of truth, it communicates to them a still greater love of charity. It is this catholic temper, which rendered the pious and illuminated Watts so amiable in his old age ; and it is the consciousness, that they wanted this temper in the early part of life, which has filled some men with regret, when it was drawing to a close.



6. Need I say, that the old man ought not to be vain? for what is there of which any man can be vain? If vanity is ever pardonable, it is in youth. For till we have tried our strength, we know not how weak we are; till we have tried our courage, we know not how cowardly we are; till we have been repeatedly exposed to temptation, we know not how frail we are. A man, to whom age has given experience, feels that he is imperfect: and yet it has been said, that vanity is apt to intrude into the bosoms of the aged; particularly of them, who have had an opportunity of seeing what others could not see, and of them, who have performed, or suppose that they have performed, extraordinary services to the public. Perhaps the observation may not be just; but if it is, it is dishonorable to them, to whom it applies. The old man, who apprehends that he is in danger of committing the fault, should carefully guard his heart and tongue. If he finds, that he is much inclined to speak of himself, he may be assured, that his apprehensions are not without foundation.

7. Old men are in more danger of becoming peevish and querulous, than of falling into vanity. When the bodily infirmities and diseases, to which age is exposed, attack them, nothing but the resolution and fortitude of a philosopher, and the patience and resignation of a Christian, will enable them to overcome this weakness of mind. It is best, if they have sufficient command over themselves, to confine their complaints to their own breasts, or to speak of them to their physician only; because the recital of pains is unpleasant to others, and useless to the sufferer. They should endeavor to be cheerful; for cheerfulness, which is in some measure in

their power, will afford them the satisfaction of rendering the hearts of their friends, if not their own hearts, easy, and will be rewarded by them with attention and kindness.

8. Of what avail to the aged are human considerations, without love to God? The world may neglect them; but their heavenly Father will not forsake them. I would therefore above all things recommend to them the consolations of piety. Life has no dark spot, which the light of Heaven cannot illuminate; there is no sad condition, which the blessed God cannot render joyful; there is no exquisite pain, which the kind Physician cannot alleviate. A merciful Providence has watched over the aged through every stage of their existence. It supported them during the helpless period of infancy; it guided them through the slippery paths of youth; it preserved them from evil in manhood, strengthened their hands, and inspired their hearts with courage: and can they fear, that its tenderness and care will now be withdrawn? No: as they approach nearer the throne of God, their confidence in his protection, their submission to his will, their love, their gratitude should increase: their hearts should become more alive to religion; their affections should glow with a more intense flame of devotion.

9. Piety is the first duty of the old; but it cannot be accounted genuine, unless it is accompanied with philanthropy. The good man, as he advances in age, grows more tender and benevolent, more mild, more indulgent, more compassionate to the wretched. His bodily powers may fail, but love still warms his heart; his

senses, his imagination, his memory may be impaired, but he still retains his charity. Such an old man becomes dearer to his friends, the longer he remains with them. Without leaving the earth, he seems already to have learned the manners of heaven. The serenity, the gentleness, the kindness, which he displays, belong to an inhabitant of a better world ; and the light of God, which is reflected from his face, proves that he has commenced his celestial career ; and that he will soon be crowned with glory, and honor, and immortality.

10. Such a good man is not afraid to think of death. As he approaches the end of life, he cannot forbear to cast his eyes frequently on the tomb ; but the prospect does not alarm him, and render him sorrowful. He is travelling to a world of unbounded bliss ; but he perceives, and is willing to acknowledge, that the country, through which he is passing, is pleasant ; that God has scattered flowers in its paths ; that it affords comforts, and even pleasures ; that many of his fellow travellers are worthy of his love ; in a word, that the present world was framed by divine wisdom, and is continually blessed by divine goodness. He views death therefore as a change of scene ; not as a relief from evil, for he is happy here ; but as a translation from a state of transitory good to a state of exquisite and never-ending felicity.

These are the considerations, which I would suggest to the aged. But I cannot conclude the discourse, without reminding the young, that they have their duties ; and that one of the most important is, to pay homage to gray hairs. We may judge in some measure of the

state of morals in any country from the manner, in which age is treated by youth. Where they, who are advanced in life, receive affection and respect, there decency is found, purity is not unknown, and the passions and appetites are under some restraint. The time was, when the old kept themselves at too awful a distance from the young ; but this reserve was productive of two evils : it rendered fathers less cheerful, and sons more licentious ; for as soon as they were out of the reach of the stern eye of authority, they gave a greater loose to their words and deeds. That state of society is the most happy, and probably the most virtuous, in which the different ages freely and frequently mix together ; and as this state of society is our own, I would hope that we do not yet deserve the character of a very corrupt people. Approach then, my young friends, the old ; and while your gayety brings a smile on their countenance, let their gravity temper your mirth. The pious and virtuous old man is worthy of your love and reverence ; he is an object, which you can contemplate with admiration and delight ; for age has the same effect on a devout and benevolent heart, which time has on a beautiful painting : it softens every color, and mellows every tint.

4th S. in Advent.

## SERMON V.

ALMS.

---

MARK XIV. 7.

YE HAVE THE POOR WITH YOU ALWAYS, AND WHENSOEVER  
YE WILL YE MAY DO THEM GOOD ; BUT ME YE HAVE NOT  
ALWAYS.

You devote, Christians, a day in the last week of the year to a sacred festival ; and you regard it as one of the most important in the religious calendar. The design is to commemorate the birth of the Saviour of mankind, to exult at the glad tidings which he has brought from heaven, and to recall to remembrance the many blessings which the gospel has conferred on the world. By celebrating the festival at this particular season, and by ornamenting your churches, and singing hymns of praise, you close the year with pious cheerfulness ; and thanksgiving and joy ascend with the voice of melody to the throne of God. An essential part of the festival is the alms, which, on this day, you are accustomed to bestow. This act, which produces useful effects, renders your devotion acceptable in the sight of the Most High, and is an indispensable proof of gratitude and affection to your benevolent Redeemer. As it respects the objects of your beneficent care, the festival is opportunely placed

at the end of the year ; for as at this season the earth is usually bound with the chains of frost, they require peculiar assistance. Such being one of the principal designs of observing the nativity of our Lord, no subject appears to me more proper for the occasion than charity ; and I trust you will not charge me with forgetting the object of the institution, when I plead before you in behalf of the poor.

That charity to the indigent is a duty of the gospel, will be allowed by all who are conversant with its pages. The Author of our religion may be styled emphatically the poor man's friend. He was well qualified to be so by his situation in life, because he was himself poor. When he was on earth, he not only bore the griefs of the sorrowful, but also the poverty of the indigent ; and in all the afflictions, which are usually laid on the wretched, he had a large share. Hence he became a merciful Redeemer, who is touched with the feeling of human infirmities, being tried in all respects as other men are. His family descended from the line of ancient Jewish kings ; but at the time of his birth, it had sunk into such indigence, that his mother could not obtain lodgings in the inn of Bethlehem, which was crowded with guests, who were less poor than herself : he was therefore laid in a manger. At her purification she offered doves, the sacrifice of the indigent, not being able to present a lamb. During the greatest part of his life Jesus wrought at a laborious employment ; and when he entered on his public ministry, he says of himself, that the foxes and the birds of the air had places of refuge, but that he was destitute of a home in which he could lay his head. So needy was he, that he was compelled to work a miracle

for the payment of his taxes : and though we are not to suppose that he was ever reduced to such a depth of misery, as to want the necessaries of life, yet it is evident that he learned from experience, as well as from sympathy, to feel for the indigent. Accordingly we find that he always attended particularly to them : and he declared that he came to preach the gospel to the poor. Whilst he inculcated in his precepts the duty of pitying and relieving their wants, he practised himself what he taught. His miraculous power was frequently exerted in favor of the indigent, and from a purse, which belonged to him and his disciples, small as it was, it appears that it was customary to give alms. He did still further honor to the necessitous, by pronouncing them his representatives : in his description of the last judgment, he speaks of himself as receiving the benefit of the benevolent deeds, which are exercised toward the hungry and the naked, the sick and the imprisoned : Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Our Saviour having ascended to heaven, the world no longer enjoys his bodily presence ; but he has left the needy behind him as his substitutes, to remind us continually of him. Infants are born in dark cellars or dilapidated chambers, where their wretched mothers are exposed to the inclemencies of the air, and deprived of every comfort and accommodation ; there are distressed wanderers, who have not where to lay their heads : and like Jesus on the cross, a pious son is sometimes obliged on the bed of death to commit an aged parent, for whose support he can no more provide, to the care of a faithful friend. Through the providence of God we have the poor with us always, as our Lord says in the text.

and whensoever we will, we can do them good, and thus testify our love to him, whilst at the same time we exercise the best virtues and the most amiable feelings of the human heart.

As we have thus the poor with us always, we are under obligations, as disciples of Christ, to pity and assist them. We should therefore, first, endeavor to acquire the will to do them good : and, secondly, we should examine in what manner we can most effectually perform this duty.

1. The will to do good to the poor is obtained by impressing on the heart the motives of reason, nature, and the gospel. The distressed object, who cries to me for relief, is a man : He has nerves, which are alive to the touch of pain ; he has a head, which throbs ; he has a heart, which beats with anguish. As he has no food to eat, he must be hungry ; as he is naked, he must be cold ; as he is sick, he must be miserable ; as he is in prison, he must suffer the vexation which necessarily arises from the loss of liberty. He is a man, and I am no more : he is my brother, of the same nature as myself. I am exposed to similar misfortunes ; and was I as deeply afflicted as he is, my tears would flow as fast and I should utter the same sad lamentations. If our situations were exchanged, and he should pity and relieve me, with what gratitude should I behold him ? If he should say to me, Brother, it is in my power to supply thy wants, and to remove thine affliction ; take this food and satisfy thy hunger ; take this garment and cover thy shivering limbs ; I open the prison doors, and restore thee to freedom ;—with what ardent love, with what a burst of joy, should I press his hand ? Why then should I not do



for him what I would wish him to do for me? With a sympathetic imagination I ought to put myself in his place, and to feel as he feels.

He is not only a man of the same nature as myself: he is also my fellow Christian, the disciple of the same Master, a member with me of the same sacred body. Jesus was born and died for his benefit as well as for mine; he is entitled to the same spiritual privileges, and is the heir of the same glorious promises. If I love him here, and he loves me, I shall meet him again in another world, where we shall promote each other's happiness to all eternity. My felicity in that state depends on the beneficence which I exercise at present: and I cannot with reason hope for the bliss of paradise, if I do not regard my brother as myself: for paradise is inhabited by none, whose souls are not filled with love.

In this manner does the man and the Christian reason; and his arguments have a direct tendency to fill his heart with good will to the poor. But the benevolent sympathies, even in the kindest heart, are greatly heightened by the actual sight of objects of distress. A picture of woe may be held up to the imagination; but however vivid may be its colors, it makes an imperfect and transient impression: in the presence of the miserable we learn, we feel, what suffering is. The precepts of the gospel, therefore, which are founded on the most perfect knowledge of human nature, command us not only to relieve, but to visit, the wretched. I was sick and in prison, says our Saviour, and ye *came* unto me: and says the Apostle James, Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to *visit* the fatherless and widows in their affliction.

The children of luxury, who have never known from

experience the meaning of the words, cold, hunger, and want, sometimes appear to suppose that the ministers of religion, when they deliver sermons on charity, are mere actors, who are endeavoring to be pathetic, by representing deep tragedy scenes which never existed. But if they would go to the houses of the poor, they would there find, that nothing has been exaggerated. They would there behold poverty without a veil to hide its ghastly features, poverty in a squalid abode, where the want of the means of cleanliness is the aggravation of every other evil. They would behold nothing to amuse their imaginations, but much to soften their hearts; nothing which would afford the subject of a tender tale, but much which would make them feel like men and Christians. Let them go and see: and they will acquire the will to do good to the poor.

II. Having fixed in the mind good will to the indigent; we ought, secondly, to consider in what manner we can most effectually discharge the duties of charity. As in the performance of every other virtue, we should adopt a method of exercising our beneficence. We should lay down a regular plan, to which we should generally adhere, not deviating from it, unless urged by new and unforeseen occurrences. We should not do good from the impulse of the moment; but our benevolence should be a permanent and habitual principle. An excellent mode, which several judicious philanthropists have practised, is to appropriate a certain proportion of our income to purposes of beneficence. What this proportion should be, it is not easy to say, as neither reason nor the gospel prescribes any fixed rule: It should depend, not merely on the disposition, but on the peculiar circumstances,

family connexions, prosperity, or embarrassments, of each individual. There have been individuals who have annually devoted one third part of their income to public and private charities. I mention this to excite the emulation of the wealthy, though I do not pretend that they are obliged strictly to copy the example. Other men have given away a fourth or a fifth part of their incomes. These proportions, as well as the first, may be thought extravagant liberality : but I would ask, is a tenth part too much for the rich : or a twentieth, for them, who possess moderate fortunes ?

We ought also to adhere to rules, and make use of an enlightened judgment in selecting the objects of charity. We ought not to bestow our alms, merely to free ourselves from a troublesome application, or to silence the clamors of an importunate beggar : In such an act there is not much merit, and indeed little which is better than selfishness : But we should impart our bounty to the most proper objects, and where we can effect the greatest good. If it is asked, Who are the proper objects ? I answer, they who are in distress, and who are unable to help themselves. In this comprehensive class are included several of the vicious : for the vicious sometimes, having lost their reputation by their crimes, and ruined their health by their debaucheries, are no longer capable of an exertion, nor if they were, can they find persons willing to give them employment. But still they are the creatures of God, and he pities them ; they are our fellow creatures, and we ought to feel for them. True ; they deserve the punishment which they suffer ; but the pittance, which we give them, will leave nearly the whole of this weight on their heads ; for it will not restore their health, it will not render them respectable, it will not calm their agitated conscience.

The virtuous poor however have the first claims on our beneficence. There are industrious men, who by sickness are rendered incapable of exertion, and who have exhausted all the earnings of their health and vigor. There are women, with families of young children, and who have just been deprived of a husband, and by his death, of all the means of support. There are aged widows, infirm, helpless, and poor, whose sons have been killed in battle or lost at sea, and who have now no comfort, no protection, but the charity of strangers. These are deserving objects: they are no impostors with counterfeited stories of distress: their misery is real, and they will not abuse our bounty. Of these persons, especially of the last class, we should take on ourselves the particular charge, either as individuals, or as members of churches and charitable societies. Having thus a certainty of regular relief at stated periods, their minds are freed from anxiety and despair.

It is not enough to give alms to the indigent; we should also devote a portion of our time and the exercise of our understandings to this benevolent work, contriving schemes which will be for the advantage of the poor, and undertaking the management of charitable funds, in such a manner as that they may be most judiciously and effectually relieved. It is here that they, who are destitute of large property, may render themselves useful; and by their exhortations, their labors, and their discreet application of the donations of the wealthy, they may be the happy instruments of assisting many of the unfortunate. The poor are often essentially benefited by wise counsel and by recommendations to others, who have power to succor them. As these acts cost nothing but time, no benevolent person will hesitate to per-

form them. A man who is determined to live for others as well as for himself, will never want means and opportunities of doing good. He can at least give the wretched kind looks and compassionate words.

Sometimes, in our bounty to the poor, we should go beyond simple necessities, and indulge them in a little innocent pleasure, particularly at seasons of festivity, like the present, when we are accustomed to fare sumptuously. In fine, we should do good to the poor, relieve their wants, lessen their pains, and render them happy, as far as our power and opportunities extend.

Such, my brethren, are your obligations as men and Christians; and such the manner in which you ought to discharge them. To induce you to perform them, I will urge one motive only: Alms, when they are bestowed from pious and benevolent principles, will carry you to heaven. This is rendering, it may be said, the path to everlasting happiness very plain and easy. True; but I do not render it easier and plainer than the Scriptures have made it. Many Christians have supposed, that our duty is hard to be understood and difficult to be performed. They have concluded therefore that it cannot be composed of such simple ingredients as industry and minding our business, discharging the obligations which we owe to society, practising sincerity and justice, loving our families and friends, and relieving the poor; but that it must consist in certain inexplicable feelings, in a mysterious kind of faith, of which a precise idea cannot be formed, and in such a love of God, as is something different from keeping his commandments. Again they are ready to think that alms is not a very essential part of religion; for though they are obliged to confess, that

great stress is laid on it in the New Testament ; yet they cannot allow that it is a first duty, because they find it more frequently performed than any other ; and they suppose that what recommends us most to the favor of God must be actions and virtues which seldom occur. But assuredly it is doing no dishonor to the Christian religion, to say, that it has produced its intended effect. Our Saviour was sent into the world to teach men, among other precepts, the lesson of beneficence ; and if many of them have actually learned it, it ought to convince us that the gospel, is a practicable, as well as a wise, institution. We with pleasure observe, that excellent and salutary as alms is, it has often been practised in every age of the church, and even when the church was disfigured by gross corruptions of doctrine.

The practice of the primitive Christians is well known, from the New Testament and from ancient ecclesiastical history. The injunctions of the Apostles on this head were frequently obeyed ; and even the heathen allowed that the beneficent example of the Christians was laudable and worthy of imitation. The Roman Catholics, who, during many ages, constituted the whole of the western church, and who still form so large a body in Christendom, have never fallen into the worst of all heresies, the decrying of good works ; but they have in every period inculcated alms. Hence have proceeded the many excellent institutions among them for the cure of the sick, for the relief of the poor, and for hospitality to strangers. The Reformation, which divided the church, created no difference of sentiment on this subject ; but the various religious denominations appear to vie with each other and with the Romish church, who shall most excel in acts of beneficence. The British

nation, who stand at the head of the Protestant powers, are also the first in showing compassion to the indigent. Without insisting on their establishments for the support of the poor, which constitute a part of their standing laws, voluntary benefactions have provided for the relief or removal of every imaginable species of disease and wretchedness. Among them also first appeared the charitable and humane societies, which are too many to be numbered. These associations are all the genuine offspring of the Christian religion : and they demonstrate the excellent nature, and the practicability of the duties of the gospel.

The descendants of a Christian nation, the inhabitants of this country, inherit a portion of their good spirit. But through the peculiar goodness of God to us, there are not such frequent opportunities of bestowing alms as in the eastern hemisphere. A subsistence can more easily be obtained ; and the indigent of consequence bear a smaller proportion to the whole number of people. In large towns, however, such as this in which we live, there will always be a great number of poor ; and here we find the soul of charity warm, vigorous, and expanded. Without presuming to draw comparisons between this city and the other cities of the United States, it must in justice to the inhabitants of this metropolis be allowed, that their extensive charities do honor to them as men and Christians. I have frequently witnessed with admiration and delight their generous benefactions, and the salutary effects which have resulted from them.

In thus praising the good deeds of my fellow citizens, my design is, to bestow on merit the reward which is its due ; and to excite, my brethren, the emulation of

you who hear me ; provoking you, as the Apostle expresses it, to love and good works. An opportunity is this day afforded you of indulging the benevolent feelings of your hearts, and of lessening the sum of human misery. The helpless, the infirm, and the old, the orphan, and the widow, all of them your fellow Christians, and several of them amiable and deserving objects, solicit your aid. Your alms will clothe them, will put bread into their mouths, will kindle the cheerful fire on their hearths, and will provide them a shelter against the rigors of winter. Let me beseech you therefore, to bestow your bounty with your accustomed liberality ; and be assured that it will be committed to faithful hands, which will impart it with discretion to the proper objects. By these donations, you will do honor to the Saviour, whose disciples you are ; you will celebrate his nativity in the most worthy manner ; your alms will rise up as a memorial before God : they will deliver you from death, and never suffer you to descend into a place of darkness.

Christmas.



## SERMON VI.

JESUS CHRIST THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

---

ISAIAH IX. 6.

UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN, UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN ;—AND  
HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED — THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

THE verse, of which the text is a part, is generally viewed by Christians as a prophecy of our Saviour. The whole deserves attention ; but the consideration of it would lead me into a long, and what would be to many of my auditors uninteresting, discussion respecting the true reading of the passage, as well as its meaning. The words, which I have selected, are acknowledged by all to be a genuine part of the sacred text, for they are found in all the copies, and in all the versions ; and they appear to me to afford ample matter for more than one discourse.—Jesus Christ is the prince of peace in two senses: the first is, that God by him has reconciled us to himself: and the second is, that the Saviour is the author of inward peace, or tranquillity of heart. It is to this last sense that I purpose to confine myself.

When the child was born, when the son was given, peace on earth was proclaimed by the angels ; and our Saviour himself declared, that by him we obtain rest to our souls. Now this blessed effect is produced by the practice of all the virtues which Christianity enjoins ; but

principally by its peculiar virtues, humility, piety, and benevolence. That the Christian religion commands these virtues, is what I need not undertake to prove at large. It will be sufficient to recite two texts. In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. — Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and thy neighbor as thyself. The author of our religion taught the same precepts by his example. He practised humility, for he was meek and lowly in heart; piety, for he always did those things which pleased his Father; benevolence, for he went about doing good.

The religions, which existed in the world before the birth of Jesus, either did not teach, or misunderstood, or did not lay sufficient stress on these virtues. The morals of the heathen were in a deplorable state. I would not here, in imitation of certain controversial writers, exaggerate the faults of the ancients; for by doing this I should contradict many records, which still exist, and should obtain no credit with the candid and impartial. We ought not to take the character of the heathen from satirical poems, from the descriptions given of a Roman emperor, or a Roman emperor's wife; because the poets have always claimed the privilege of feigning, for the sake of producing an interesting effect: But we ought to take their character from grave historians and moral writers, and from the public sentiment, in whatever way we come to its knowledge. Thus if an act of fraud or cruelty was inveighed against by an orator, we have reason to think that it excited the indignation of his hearers, as well as our indignation in the present age. If an act of civility, or a humane sentiment, was applauded by

the spectators at a theatre, there is ground for believing that they understood civility and humanity, and that they sometimes put them in practice. The heathen were acquainted with several of the duties of man ; and without doubt they were faithfully observed by many : but that they had little knowledge of the peculiar virtues of the gospel is certain. For humility they had scarcely a name ; of benevolence they had so imperfect an idea, that their best moral writers inculcate only a dignified kind of selfishness ; and there could have been no true piety among them, as they were ignorant of the God who is its object. Being then in a great measure destitute of these three virtues, humility, piety, and benevolence, they could not have enjoyed true tranquillity.

I. For, first, there is no peace without humility. As the proud man despises almost every person whom he meets, he consequently does not delight in him ; that is, from another man he derives no pleasure. He is filled with envy and jealousy, and is perpetually afraid that others will outshine him, and be more honored than himself. If he has talents and knowledge, he displays them, not to benefit the world, but to procure fame. If he performs an action, which is good in its effects, his motive is the love of praise. He may obtain praise ; but he will not obtain sufficient to satisfy him. For the love of praise is like the love of the intoxicating draught ; it is never quite strong enough : a little more ardent spirit, and a little more pungent spice must every day be added, or it will appear as cold and as insipid as water. Of fame however, it is probable, he will seldom receive a large portion. Even the humble and candid will overlook a part of his merit ; for they cannot enter into all

his feelings, or be acquainted with all his labors: they have other objects to attend to beside him, and cannot with justice look at him only. The ignorant will not understand him; the critical eye will pry into his defects; his rivals will thwart him. Those, who are as proud and envious as himself, will depreciate his talents; and those, whom he has treated with contempt, will repay him with hatred and calumny.

Is such a man happy? Is his heart tranquil? Has he peace within, when his bosom is swelling with turbulent desires; when what he wishes he does not enjoy? Such however was the character of the heathen. Their systems of morals inculcated self-esteem, and held out the love of fame as a motive. Their best men appear to have been proud men; who did what they called good in order to be talked of, or to display a false dignity; who denied themselves the pleasures, which other men relish, for the sake of receiving the pleasure of applause; who affected to despise pain, that they might rise above the vulgar; who hardened their hearts against the charities of life, that they might not appear to possess the weakness of tenderness; who could see the death of a wife without emotion, and plunge a dagger into the bosom of a sister, for the sake of hearing the shouts of the populace; who could adjudge a son to death, though that painful office might better have been performed by another person; and who could be the first to murder a friend, that their countrymen might extol the heroism of the deed.

Others of the heathen, who had no virtue, except that which they call virtue, that is, bravery, sought for and obtained the applause of their contemporaries by the most detestable actions, and are in the present age prais-

ed by those, who think and feel like the heathen. With souls swelling with pride, they eagerly coveted the fame of warlike achievements. Contemptuously trampling on those, who had nerves like themselves, they slaughtered, and laid waste, and made millions wretched, from no other motive than that they might appear great. They were great, I confess : the historian and orator have immortalized their names : but were they happy ? Was there peace in their hearts ? They were as happy as the hero, whom Milton, by the magic of verse, has rendered as sublime as he is hateful ; and who, whilst he is suffering the most exquisite torments, is the object of admiration and shuddering delight.

The child, whose birth we this day celebrate, was sent to teach us a different system of morality. There is no happiness in pride ; and he came to give us the peace which flows from humility. The true Christian, who imbibes his spirit, who submits to the dominion of the prince of peace, may be despised and rejected by men ; but he cannot be very miserable ; for he has in his heart a peace, which the world cannot take from him. As he desires not fame, he is not disappointed, if it is not bestowed. As he has a low and just opinion of himself, and knows that he is only one atom among the infinite number, which compose the works of God, he does not presume that he shall become the object of general attention. He is not proud, and consequently endures none of the pangs of envy. He endeavors to acquire all the knowledge, which is necessary to enable him to act well the part assigned by his Maker ; but he knows that God has not imparted to him all his gifts : he does not therefore expect, and hardly hopes to shine. He is willing however that others should be brilliant. He re-

joices in the talents, which his brothers possess, provided they are the means of moral or even physical advantage, as much as if they were his own. Beauty, of whatever kind it may be, whether of person, understanding, or character, affords him the pleasure, which it is naturally adapted to excite, and which it always does excite, when the heart is free from pride and envy. With true lowliness of mind, he esteems those of whom he speaks as more excellent than himself; and in honor he prefers those, with whom he converses, and with whom he is connected. He strives to do all the moral good in his power but with his limited capacity, he is convinced that he cannot do much; he is willing therefore that it should be effected by others. Silently and modestly he assists them in promoting their pious and benevolent plans, without being ambitious of the honor of originating everything which is laudable; and he consents that the whole of the merit should be ascribed to them, whilst he has performed a part of the labor. As he has a just sense of the imperfection of his own understanding and heart, he makes a candid allowance for the follies and faults of other men. He desires only to be good himself, and not to rise above them; and he does not wish that they should sink below him by their weaknesses and crimes. He rejoices not in the iniquities of his enemies: he rejoices not in the iniquities of his friends. — The prince of peace came to form the heart of such a man; and does not his heart enjoy tranquillity? No bitter fountain of envy flows into his bosom; no storm of pride agitates his affections; but humility diffuses a holy calm over his breast: and as a smooth lake reflects every beautiful flower and tree which grows on its borders, and all the magnificence of the supernal heavens; so his

heart is the joyful reflection of the virtues of other men, whilst its centre is occupied with an expanded and vivid image of the goodness of God.

II. For there cannot be genuine humility, where there is not a knowledge and love of the Supreme Being : which leads me to observe, secondly, that there is no peace without piety. It will hardly be pretended, that the heathen were pious : for they could not love a Being with whom they were unacquainted. One or two distinguished individuals only appear to have discovered the unity of God. The popular belief was, that there are as many divinities as there are elements and stars. All of them were finite beings, that is, they had a beginning, and consequently might have an end. They were imperfect in their moral qualities ; for they reviled, deceived, and opposed each other. Some of them were tyrannical, others capricious, and others licentious ; and all of them delighted, not so much in the devotion of an humble and grateful heart, as in the fragrance of incense, and the blood of innocent animals. Some of them tempted human beings to vice ; and others even sported with their miseries. In fine, they were like men, but not much like good men ; for they bore a greater resemblance to Alcibiades and Alexander, than to Socrates and Aurelius.

The heathen of a more refined class held the doctrine of fate ; which controlled, not only human actions but the gods themselves. But this fate did not proceed by any rules of right and reason ; good intentions were not a defence against its inexorable vengeance, as it involved equally the guilty and innocent in irretrievable misery. It was not an animated being, and consequently



not an object of any of the affections. It was both deaf and blind: it could hear no prayers; it could see no suffering. Like the waves of the ocean, which plunge a ship in the deep, it rolled a flood of wo over the frail bark of human life: but, like the ocean, it was insensible; it felt no pity; it was even unconscious of the terrific sound of its own billows. For fate was not God: it possessed no moral qualities: it was dreaded, but could not be adored and loved.

Whilst the heathen supposed themselves under the government of such divinities as I have described, and such an omnipotent fate, they could not have derived any tranquillity from their religion: for the heart must believe itself secure, before it can be at peace. In such a wild anarchy of deities, or such a blind and irresistible motion, there could not be safety. The sun might not rise to-morrow, though it rose to-day; the world might burst asunder; and the gods themselves be hurled from their thrones. There was then no superior being for man to love; none, who was worthy of his adoration; and none, in whom he could confide. He had not much cause to be grateful for any favors, which the gods might bestow; because they were not the rewards of an innocent life, but were fairly purchased with the victims which he slaughtered. He could not with reason hope for relief from any miseries, which he might endure, because the gods were impotent, and could not themselves resist the current of fate.

The son, who was born this day, was sent to correct these errors. He came to demolish the idols of the heathen; and to reveal, to the whole of the human race, the most important of all truths, which was before known to one favored nation only, — that there is one God, who



has always existed, and always will exist ; whose power is unlimited, and who is everywhere present ; who is not blind and insensible like fate, but who possesses moral attributes, and can be adored, and feared, and loved ; who is wise, just, and good ; who created the heavens, the earth, everything which we behold, and which we can even conceive ; who gives us every blessing which we enjoy : who never sports with the miseries of his creatures, but who delights in making us happy, and whenever he afflicts us, has a wise and gracious design ; who is not only our maker and governor, but our friend ; who has compassion on our infirmities, is ready to pardon our sins, as soon as we repent, and pities us as a father pities his own children ; and who in particular so loved the world, as to send his son to reveal these consolatory truths.

We need hear no more. If there is such a being, our hearts are at rest. The prince of peace has expelled every doubt and terror. Whatever a God of so much power, wisdom, and mercy ordains, must be right. We look up to him with faith ; we pray to him with confidence, persuaded that he will grant all our reasonable requests. Our souls swell with sublime delight, whilst we contemplate the majesty of his perfections. This is a being, whom we can love with all our heart ; whom we adore for his holiness, and to whom, whilst we exist, we shall be grateful for his unbounded goodness.

Such is the peace, such the joy, which is derived from genuine piety. The man, who possesses this spirit, is not cast down by the force of calamity ; for he stands firm on an everlasting rock. Whilst the storm rages without, within him there is a calm. He fears nothing ; for what injury can he suffer ? He knows that an al-

mighty arm supports him, and will not permit him to fall. In the darkest scenes there is light in the presence of God ; and he believes that he is always in his presence. He trusts that the eye of his eternal friend constantly beholds him ; that not a tear of contrition is shed, but it is observed ; that not the faintest sigh of devotion proceeds from his lips, but it is heard ; that not a good thought is conceived in his heart, but it is instantly known. Whilst the love of God thus fills his mind, he not only enjoys the consolation of inward peace, but he also improves in every moral grace, which can adorn the character of a Christian. He is continually striving to render himself more and more a fit habitation for the holy spirit. He endeavors to become perfect, as his Father in heaven is perfect ; and in imitation of the infinite kindness of God, to do good to every finite being within his reach. Thus benevolence takes deep root in his heart ; and he is not more distinguished for love to his Maker, than for love to his fellow creatures.

III. Which leads me, thirdly, to observe, that there is no peace without benevolence. It must be confessed, that the heathen were not entirely unacquainted with this virtue. They were taught, and many of them practised, the duties of courtesy and hospitality, of parental affection and filial obedience, of friendship and patriotism ; all which are branches of benevolence. They were besides acquainted with the obligations of truth and justice. There were among them great and noble characters, who in a good cause displayed a magnanimity, which did honor to human nature. These virtues unquestionably contributed to their happiness as individuals, and promoted the prosperity of the society of which

they were members. Notwithstanding their absurd opinions, gross vices, and abominable idolatries, they still retained virtue enough to keep nations together. The light of heaven was not entirely withdrawn: and though they saw not the luminary from which it proceeded, yet its feeble rays served in some measure to direct their steps.

But as they were ignorant of the true God, their benevolence had no solid foundation. They could not consider themselves as bound together by the tie of a common origin, as children of the same family. They saluted their brethren, they loved their friends, they loved their country; but in this, as our Saviour teaches, there was little merit; for they called the rest of mankind barbarians, and regarded them as enemies. They seldom felt the emotions of pity; they appear not to have known what is meant by charity; there was no relief for the poor: the helpless were left to perish; their public diversions consisted in the torments of men and the inferior animals; their slaves and captives in war were treated with insult and cruelty; and many of the rites of their religion were bloody and inhuman. But what more than any other cause rendered their benevolence defective was, that they thought it not criminal, that it was even laudable, to foster revenge and hatred in their breasts. Their most virtuous authors relate without censure the direful effects of these malignant passions: and they appear to have considered it as no fault in the men, whom they have chosen for their heroes, — that they plundered the innocent; that they made war on their weaker neighbors, who had done them no wrong; that they never forgave a foe, but pursued him with unrelenting vengeance; and that they circum-

vented an enemy by treachery ; — provided they were faithful to their engagements, and abstained from injuring those, from whom they had received benefits. In such souls there could not be peace ; for peace dwells not with the malicious and revengeful. Man is made to love his fellow man ; and whenever he hates him, his constitution is in disorder, the fibres of his heart are preternaturally stretched, his nerves no longer vibrate with harmony.

The child, who was born this day, came to restore our hearts to the state, in which only happiness can be found. He came to give them peace, by filling them with love. He placed benevolence on piety, its only true basis ; and he taught us to love all men, because they are all the children of God. He commanded us to do to others, as we would they should do to us ; and consequently never to insult, oppress, or hate any one, because this is not what we should choose ; to love our neighbors as ourselves ; and to do them good, without the expectation of receiving a return. He taught us, not only to be hospitable to the civilized stranger, but to give meat and drink to the famished barbarian ; not only to love and bless our friends ; but to love and bless our enemies. He taught us, not, in imitation of the heathen, to expose the sickly infant to perish with cold, or to be torn in pieces by wild beasts ; but to water the tender plant, and to cherish it with the warmth of kindness, if haply it might live, and grow up, and flourish. He commanded us, not only to honor our parents, while we are dependent on their bounty, but to reverence, comfort, and protect them, even to the last moment of decrepit old age. He taught us, not only to salute those who return our salutations, but to be courteous to the rude ; not

only to respect the wise, but to be indulgent to the erroneous; not only to pay homage to the powerful, but to give honor to the weak. He commanded us, above all, to have pity on the poor; to relieve distress, from whatever cause it might proceed; to be merciful to the unthankful, as well as the grateful; and to have compassion even on the vicious. In a word, it is the design of his religion to render us universally benevolent and disinterested; so that all our thoughts are engaged in contriving, and all our actions in promoting, the felicity of others.

That a man, who is able to rise to this height of benevolence, enjoys tranquillity, requires no proof. He is like God, who is constantly diffusing bliss throughout the creation; and there dwells in his mind a portion of that happiness, which blesses the immortal King of heaven. Many persons perhaps may deem that this height is inaccessible to a feeble mortal; but that it is, cannot be true; because it is the natural state of the perfect man, and to which his moral powers, when rightly improved, must at last bring him. It is essential to the human mind, that it should make perpetual progress; that it should rise from matter to spirit, from self-love to benevolence; and till it attains this state, it cannot find rest. We have tried pride, envy, revenge, and malice, and our souls have been filled with tortures. We have tried mere selfishness; we have thought, not of injuring others, but only of benefiting ourselves; and still have not had peace. For man has in himself few sources of pleasure, but many of pain. If he will not love others, he must necessarily love himself only; and when he loves none but himself, he then perceives that he has selfish sensibilities, which are rudely shaken by the com-

mon accidents of life. When he shuts himself up in his own bosom, he is like a person, who is confined in a dungeon, who beholds neither the light of heaven, nor the cheerful face of a fellow creature; and who, in this dark and melancholy solitude, has no other employment than to brood over his own woes. But when he goes out of himself, he no longer attends to his own sufferings. The sorrow of others excites his sympathy; but sympathy is a pleasant sensation; for though a small degree of pain is mixed with it, yet it is almost entirely lost in the exquisite pleasure, which he tastes in doing good. The tears, which he has shed for his own misfortune, have been scalding tears, which have burned his cheek, and filled his mouth with bitterness: but the tears, which he sheds for the miseries of other men, are like the soft rains that descend in spring; they refresh his heart, and cause new virtues there to spring up, blossom, and bring forth fruit.

Such is the peace, which the prince of peace was sent to communicate. He is come to save us from the miseries of pride, ungodliness, and selfishness; and to give rest to our souls, by filling them with humility, piety, and benevolence. That his religion has produced this effect in the hearts of many, there can be no doubt. The history of the church in all ages, and our own observation, may convince us, that there are Christians, who, humble and devout, have employed every faculty of their minds in promoting the glory of God, and in diffusing happiness among their fellow creatures. Pleasant have been their walks through life; and “soft are their dying beds.” They leave a world, where they have enjoyed so much tranquillity, a tranquillity, which

nevertheless has been sometimes disturbed by the tempests that blow in this state of imperfection, to go to a world, where there will be a perpetual calm, and where the people of God will enter into everlasting peace.

But though there undoubtedly have been, and still are, many such Christians: yet of others who call themselves Christians, it may be said with truth, that their characters bear a greater resemblance to those of the heathen, than of the followers of Jesus. For their souls are charged with envy, pride, impiety, and malice; and wretched themselves, they appear to have no other object than to inflict as much misery as possible on the rest of mankind. That the gospel has not been able to cure the disease of their hearts, will not be thought strange, when it is remembered that it is offered to free beings, who are not irresistibly impelled to embrace it, but who have power to reject its heavenly maxims. There is no remedy for them, till they choose to reform, but they must continue to be agitated with the passions, which torment their souls.

A great part of mankind, though they have not attained the summit of goodness, have not however sunk into this abyss of depravity. They have a mixed character, in which selfishness and benevolence alternately predominate. Such probably are some who are present. Their hearts are not entirely at ease; for they are not perfectly humble, devout, and kind.

But, my Christian friends, if you would obtain the peace, which the prince of peace came to offer you, you must submit to the rules that he has given, and imitate his example.



1. You must first learn the lesson of humility. What do any of you possess, of which you have reason to be proud ?

You are vain of your beauty ; you frequently contemplate your image with self-complacence ; and you hope to become the object of general admiration : But you never receive as much homage, as your heart demands ; and when you look at yourself more attentively, you secretly confess and lament, that you exact more than is justly your due ; for you can perceive some things in your face and person, which you would be glad to mend. The eye of envy can discern your defects still more plainly ; and even candor must allow, that your form is not faultless ; that you have not that ideal beauty, which the painter and statuary can express, but which probably was never yet bestowed on any human being. Although then you sometimes delight in yourself, yet you are not always satisfied with your personal charms ; and still less with the effect, which they produce on others.

You boast of your riches : But you know that you are not as affluent, as you wish to appear ; that you have not sufficient wealth to satisfy the demands of avarice or the love of pleasure ; that you are obliged to deny yourself many gratifications, because you are unable to purchase them ; that you are still compelled to toil ; that there are other men richer than you ; that you have not yet attained the summit of gold, on which you expect to find rest and peace ; and that though some persons fall down before you, yet that their worship is mercenary and mean, and consequently cannot confer any honor, because no man pays respect to mere wealth, unless he expects to derive some advantage from his homage.

You are proud of your talents and learning : But how little do you know, in comparison of what there is to be

known ! You excel in one or two points ; but how deficient are you in others ! Of this you are conscious ; and whilst you carefully conceal your imperfections from the world, you are perpetually afraid that it will discover the secret. The envious, it is true, depreciate you below what you deserve ; but at the same time you are sensible that you pass among your friends for more than you are worth ; that you are not acquainted with as many languages, arts, and sciences, as they suppose ; that in many branches of knowledge you are quite superficial ; that you have acquired only a few of the terms ; and though when you deal them out with fluency, you make the ignorant stare, yet you feel all the while, that you ought not to derive any pleasure from their applause, or be proud of such a vain display. Even when you endeavor to exhibit the talents, which you really possess, talents, which a long and laborious education, and the agony of thought, have in some measure moulded and polished into an harmonious form, though you sometimes succeed, yet you find by experience that you more frequently fail. You can seldom originate what is new, perspicuous, or interesting. After the most industrious efforts, you cannot produce anything which pleases yourself, or which ought to please others. Your thoughts and expressions for the most part are cold, trite, and obscure. When the rare moment of inspiration at last arrives, it so frequently comes without any act of your own, that you have no more reason to be proud of it, than of any natural advantage, which is independent of yourself : for it descends unbidden, like the lightning of heaven ; it flashes suddenly on your mind, and soon leaves it in darkness and gloom. Your partial friends, who behold the reflection of the light in the next public exhibition of yourself,

fondly hope that you can always be as brilliant, if you please : but you know that their expectations are vain, and that the flame of genius is not subject to your command. During a long life, spent in painful study, and anxious watchings for the sacred fire, you may be able once or twice to compose a work, which will affect, delight, or astonish the world ; but the rest of your productions, you will confess, ought to be consigned to everlasting oblivion, as there is nothing in them to charm or enlighten mankind. Besides, what ought to humble you is, that your genius is frequently accompanied with the most pitiful weaknesses, with such a palpable departure from the rules of common sense and common prudence, with such caprices and prejudices, that even vulgar men deride you. You are commonly so little acquainted with the ordinary course of human affairs, that a fool may deceive you, and a knave, by flattering your vanity, render you the prey of the grossest impositions. Of this in time you will become sensible ; and on the whole you will learn from experience, that talents and learning without humility can never fill your heart with peace.

The addresses, which I have made, apply not to many ; for few have either beauty, wealth, or genius. The greatest part of mankind are placed in such a station of mediocrity, that pride in them provokes nothing but scorn. Let them do what they will, they are not able to excite much attention, or to extort any homage from the world. If therefore they are not humble, they must of necessity be wretched. Of many it may be said, that they are not endowed with external charms ; and of others, that though they once possessed them, yet that they are passed away, and that the flowers of spring are long since faded. The crowd of admirers, who formerly

attended them, disappear ; and they feel that the world is made, not for them, but the young. Of many it may be said, that all their endeavors to acquire wealth have been unsuccessful ; that they have found it even difficult to secure the common comforts of life ; and that they now look up with despair to that fortune, which they cannot expect to reach. And of many it is true, that though before they made trial of their powers, they had a secret hope, that their knowledge and genius might illuminate the earth ; yet now they are convinced, that it is not given to them to shine ; but that they are doomed, however reluctantly, to tread the same dull road of life, which others have passed, and at last to sink into oblivion, with the great multitude of mankind. The ardent expectations of youth have with many been found to be mere dreams. After a few years of experience, man has learned, that he is a much weaker, more ignorant, and more insignificant creature, than he could possibly have once conceived ; that he is of little importance to any one but himself ; and that, though he may swell and endeavor to appear great, yet that he does not excite the attention of his fellow men ; or if they sometimes look at him, it is with no other purpose than to mock at his vanity. Is it not strange that such a being should be proud, when he has on no occasion derived any pleasure or honor from his pride ?

2. There is no remedy for this vice, and no consolation for the mortification, which any man feels under the sense of his unimportance, except the love of God. Piety, my brother, will render you humble, and at the same time ennoble your mind. It will convince you, that though you are of no consequence in the eyes of

men ; yet that the eye of God regards you with complacency ; that in his sight you are an immortal being, whom he designs for everlasting felicity. With him it is of no moment, whether or not your actions are great in themselves, provided your intentions are pure. The smallest deed of virtue is accepted by him, if your motives are good. Men may not applaud you, may not even observe you ; but what need that avail, if you can secure the approbation of your Maker ? Regardless therefore of fame, which so few can procure, and which, when it is obtained, is always given sparingly and reluctantly, look upward to heaven. In that sacred court there is no difference of rank, except what is constituted by superiority in goodness. Act your part well, and you will not only find peace on earth, but a crown of glory in the kingdom of God.

Think not however, my brethren, that piety belongs only to the many, and that the privileged few are exempted from its obligations. It cures the pride of the high, as well as of the low. It sanctifies a state of wealth ; and converts the illuminated understanding into a holy temple to God. When riches and talents are with humility and devotion consecrated to the honor of the Supreme Being, they bless those who possess them ; they fill their hearts with peace ; and they diffuse light, happiness, and virtue through an extensive circle of mankind.

3. Such, my brethren, if you have received these gifts, should be your aim. With gratitude to Heaven for the favors, which have been bestowed on you, you should piously resolve to do with them all the good that you can, and to communicate as much felicity as possi-

ble to the children of your divine Parent, and to the disciples of your beneficent Lord. — You devote this day to commemorate the birth of the prince of peace. You have cut down branches from the trees to decorate his temple; you have sung hosannas to his name; but there is no merit nor value in these actions, if your hearts are filled with pride, selfishness, and impiety. With the alteration of a single word, I may address you in the language of the Prophet Isaiah: Will you call this a feast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the feast which I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you brake every yoke? Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out to your house? when you see the naked, that you cover him, and that you hide not yourselves from your own flesh?

This day is with many, not so much a day of devotion, as the commencement of a season of festivity, which is to be extended through the rigors of winter. You have already laid the plan of the entertainments, which you purpose to give each other in your houses; and you anticipate much delight, and perhaps a little praise, from the delicacy of taste, which you will display in the choice of your viands, from the splendor of your decorations, from the grace and ease, with which you will receive your guests, and from the brilliancy of your conversations. I would not be thought too rigid a censor. These pleasures are harmless, when they are not repeated too frequently, when they do not prevent you from discharging the important duties of life, in fine, when they are not abused. It cannot be supposed, that the Being, who has enriched the earth with so many minerals and

precious gems, and scattered over its surface so many fragrant and gorgeous flowers, has forbidden you to cultivate a taste for the elegant and ornamental. There is a satisfaction in looking at the face which is brightened with smiles : and in conversation there is a charm, which dilates, and sometimes improves, the heart. But allowing these things to be innocent, there is a still better way, by which you will infallibly make yourselves happy, and which will soften all the horrors of the inclement season : While you are contriving these entertainments, form a plan of making the winter pass as a period of cheerfulness and content to those, with whom, without your care, it will be a season of gloom and distress. Let the sorrowful sighing of the prisoners, who are confined, some, it is true, for their crimes, but some also, for their misfortunes, come into your ears. Let the poor, who are sick, receive from you medicine, and their families, food. Bring the children, who are cast out, to a house, where they will find shelter and protection. Warm the withered limbs of the aged widow, who, without your aid, will be stiffened with the increasing cold. If you faithfully execute this plan, your hearts, when spring returns, will be as serene as that mild season ; and you will always look back with satisfaction on a winter, which has been passed in such charitable works. But from the execution of your other plan, it is not certain, that you will derive all that delight, which you anticipate. The mere pleasures of sense make little impression. None but a gross epicure remembers, or wishes to remember, long, the taste of any dish ; for as it is associated with no image of the fancy or understanding, it leaves scarcely any traces in the brain. But the mortifications, which you will suffer, as they exist in the mind, will not



soon be forgotten. Notwithstanding all the pains which you take, the result will seldom correspond with the preparations that are made: several articles, deemed essential, will be forgotten; and many things will be out of place. At the houses of others you will not always receive the attention, which you think your due: some person will be preferred before you, though his claims are not superior to your own. Conversation too will often be dull; and the day or the evening will pass off languidly. You will utter several frigid jests, of which, when you recollect them on the succeeding day, you will be heartily ashamed: and if the conversation with a select band, in a corner of the apartment, assumes what may be thought a more dignified style; if you undertake to settle the interesting concerns of the nation, you will be frequently contradicted, and sometimes conquered in an argument. On the whole, though you may meet with the pleasure, which you are seeking for; yet it is not impossible that the winter may be embittered with repeated mortifications. But if you devote yourselves to the service of the wretched, you will be exposed to none of this chagrin. With the expense of one sumptuous feast, you may afford substantial aid to a great number of poor families; and in the meantime you will have more leisure to attend to your domestic affairs, more leisure to cultivate the minds of your children, more leisure to improve your own understandings. I do not suggest these things with the expectation of inducing you to give up the first of your plans; but I would hope to prevail on you not entirely to neglect the other. If you think it wise and salutary, begin to execute it this day; begin with bestowing your bounty on your indigent brethren of this church, who now ask of

you your alms. While your hearts exult at the birth of the prince of peace, let their souls also be filled with joy. Then will the blessing of those, who are ready to perish, come upon you ; and you will contribute in part to the promotion of the great design for which the Saviour was born ; which was — to manifest the glory of God, to bind up the broken-hearted, to comfort those who mourn, and to produce peace on earth, and good will to men.

Christmas.

# S E R M O N   V I I .

THE END OF THE YEAR.

---

1 P E T E R   I V .   7 .

THE END OF ALL THINGS IS AT HAND : BE YE THEREFORE  
SOBER, AND WATCH UNTO PRAYER.

THAT we are accustomed to regard this season as the end of the year, is not owing to any divine command, or to any particular position of the heavenly bodies: it is entirely a human ordinance, to which it is proper to conform for no other reason, than because it is used by other men. But notwithstanding one day is as fit to end the year as another, yet as the point is settled by universal consent, we are inclined to consider this termination as completing one of the divisions of life; and certain reflections are apt to enter the minds of the thoughtful. In these reflections, which are of a serious, and somewhat of a melancholy cast, it is best to indulge; because it is always of use to be serious, and not unprofitable sometimes to be melancholy. When we have attained the middle of life, — and many of us, my brethren, have reached beyond it, — we have seen the termination of so many sublunary pleasures, we have lost so many things which render life valuable, that a contemplation of the end forces itself on our minds. I naturally therefore at this time turn my attention to the subject. My purpose

is, first, to recall to your recollection a few of the reflections, which a contemplation of the end of the year suggests; and, secondly, to remind you, in a brief exhortation, of the actions and habits, which are connected with them.

I. A reflection on the end of the year leads us to fix our thoughts on many other things, which end. When we view the last rays of the setting sun, on the last day of its annual course, we cannot forbear to say, How transitory are all earthly objects! A few days ago, as it seems, the year commenced, and now it is gone, and in a moment it will be sunk forever in the ocean of eternity. Though it has carried away with it a great portion of my life: yet its progress has been so rapid, that it has left me little time for enjoyment, and less for improvement.— Other periods of life, though of a somewhat longer duration, are of the same transient nature.

Childhood thus passes away, and soon comes to an end. It is generally esteemed by those, who enjoy it no more, as the most happy season of life; but those, who are in it, are impatient for its termination. They ardently wish to experience what it is to be their own masters, to go and come when they please, and to be free from the restraints, which the authority of elders and superiors imposes on them. Childhood is gone, and with it a great part of the pleasures of existence. There is an end of the heart-thrilling sport, of the innocent laugh, which is not excited by the malignity of wit, and which bursts on the ear like the wild notes of a bird. There is an end too of no small portion of the importance of life; for, strange as it might be thought without experience, the trifling amusements and employments of child-

hood appear more momentous, whilst we are engaged in them, than the more serious occupations of riper years.

Youth however is a period, in which the business of life still appears of some importance. It is an age, which we would, if it was possible, chain down to a rock of adamant. But time bears it on with his quickest wing : whilst we are thinking that it is just commenced, we find it at an end. This portion of our existence is frequently supposed to abound with the most exquisite delights. It is certainly more interesting, but, I believe, not quite so happy, as the middle of life. There are in it too many mortifications, too much disappointed love, too many broken hearts. We are too much exposed in it to tumultuous passions and raging appetites. It is a tempestuous sea, over which the winds blow with the violence of a hurricane, and where we are in constant danger, either of beating against the rocks, or of foundering in the deep. When we have passed over it with an unshattered bark, instead of lamenting that this sea is so narrow, we ought rather to rejoice that youth is at an end ; and that we are now arrived at manhood, a smoother sea, where we can sail with less hazard.

As not many persons are willing to think themselves old, although they are obliged to confess that they are no longer young, manhood appears the longest portion of human life. It does not terminate, like youth, in ten or twelve annual revolutions of the earth ; but it is protracted to twenty or thirty years. How short a period are thirty years. They are gone : manhood is passed away as well as youth. We stand on the verge of the year, and on the verge of age. When we have taken one step more, we become old men.

You, my brother, whose head is not entirely covered

with the "blossoms of the grave," will not apply what I have now said to yourself. A few persons, however, who are present, may not hesitate to acknowledge that they are old. If they have seen sixty winters, they ought to confess it, melancholy as the confession may be. The termination of the year, the chilness of the air, and the length of the nights at this season, must necessarily remind them of the close of life, of the cold grave, and of the long, dark night of death, into which they will soon be plunged.

It is a melancholy thought, that we shall soon see the end of the passing year; and when we look at any sublunary object, there is something sad in the reflection, that we see it for the last time. Whether it is a river or a hill, a tree, or even a stone, if when we cast our eyes upon it, we are compelled to say, I shall behold thee no more, the heart is depressed with instant gloom.\*

Something similar to what I shall now describe many of you, my brethren, have felt. —When you were sailing down one of our rivers into the ocean, and taking leave forever of that part of the country, in which you had passed the first years of life, you contemplated the distant mountains, on the summits of which rested the silver-fringed clouds. Extending from the shore was a well-known valley, in which the trees were disposed in all the various forms of beauty, and at the extremity of which you could faintly discern the village, in which you were born. As the ship was borne rapidly along by the ebbing tide, how did your spirits sink within you, whilst you silently said, Farewell, ye sublime mountains, and

\* See the last number of Johnson's Idler.

thou beautiful valley, farewell : I shall see you no more.\*

Your heart was filled with a more tender melancholy when, just before your departure, you visited for the last time the churchyard, where lie buried the friends of your youth. You there fondly recollected past scenes of endearment. One grave in particular attracted your attention : it was the spot where your father lies. Whilst you walked round it with a throbbing bosom, a gentle breeze from the southwest [L.] blew over the grave. For a moment you almost thought, that you heard the spirit of the good man speaking in the wind ; and an ejaculation burst from you, May I live like him ; and may the end of my life be like his !

But without visiting the repositories of the dead to learn the truth, that life is coming to an end, the situation of a minister of the gospel, in particular, is adapted to fix it in the mind. His employment, which is pleasant enough in other respects, is peculiarly sad in this circumstance, that in a few years he sees the end of many of his flock. The friends, to whose kindness and partiality he owes the strongest obligations of gratitude, descend to the grave. The pillars of the church are thrown down ; and there is a necessity of replacing them with others of more youth and firmness. He sees an end too of many tender infants, of many young women as innocent as they were lovely, of many pious matrons, of many honest and industrious men and valuable members of society, of many intelligent and devout Christians.

\* Mary, looking towards the land, often repeated these words, "Farewell, France, farewell ; I shall never see thee more."—*Hume's Hist. of Eng.* A. D. 1561.



Soon there will be an end of the rest of the flock ; and soon, an end of the pastor himself.

II. If all things thus come to an end, what practical use, my brethren, should you make of this contemplation ? Of the actions and habits which are connected with it, I now proceed to remind you in a brief exhortation.

1. I would exhort you to direct your thoughts, at this season of the year, to the state of your worldly affairs. I urge you to do this, not from worldly motives ; — they are sufficiently obvious, and it is not my business to lay them before you : — but that you may prove yourselves to be honest men. If you find, on examination, that your expenses exceed your income, it is your duty to curtail them as much as possible ; for otherwise you are in danger of injuring your creditors, and eventually of involving your families in great distress. If also, on an accurate scrutiny, you perceive that your power of doing good is not equal to the benevolence of your hearts, you should inquire what superfluities you can abridge, what savings you can make from your own pleasures, that you may add to the enjoyments of other men.

2. At this season of the year, I would recommend to you to look into the state of your understandings. Are there no branches of knowledge, which would render you useful to yourselves, your friends, your country, and the church ; and which you might acquire, if you would devote sufficient time and pains to their acquisition ? Can you not make yourselves more complete masters of the sciences, which you have in part obtained ; but which

you comprehend in so imperfect a manner, that you are not able to avail yourselves of all the advantages, which might be derived from them; and which, unless you stamp them deeper in your minds, will soon be erased from your memory? In looking back on the past year, you perhaps have cause to reproach yourselves with negligence. You have wasted many precious hours in foolish talking and jesting, in unprofitable amusements, or, what is as bad, in mere sloth. You ought now, at the close of the year, to form a resolution to alter your conduct; and not to persevere in sacrificing to present ease and fancied pleasures the hopes and enjoyments of future periods. If you are not advanced beyond the middle of life, it may not yet be too late to retrieve, in some measure, the time, which you have lost; but you must increase your diligence; and not be satisfied with yourselves, till you have reached the state, which you would have attained if your industry had never known any relaxation.

3. I would exhort you to examine your hearts. Do you possess all the virtues, which reason and religion can prescribe? Are there not duties, which your rank in society, and the relations in which you stand with respect to other men, impose, and which you have not yet performed? Is it sufficient that you do no harm; that you injure no one; that you are mere negative characters? God did not for this purpose confer on you such noble powers. You are capable of exalted virtue, and of being actively good. If in the passing year there are no monuments of your liberality, you ought now, at the close of it, to resolve to excite your minds, to fill them with zeal, and to inquire what you can do, to promote good

morals and piety among men, and to increase the happiness of those by whom you are surrounded.

4. I would exhort you to look, at this season of the year, into your consciences, and to probe them to the quick. This is a painful duty ; but it is essential to the health of your souls. Have you committed no sins, the guilt of which has not yet been washed away by repentance ? Are there no bad habits, which are gradually riveting themselves in your character, and which, unless you attend to them immediately, will soon become so firmly fixed, that it will be impossible to remove them ? At present, if you exert all your strength, you may be able to save yourselves from destruction ; but if you neglect yourselves another year, your situation will be hopeless, and your ruin inevitable.

5. I would exhort you to turn your thoughts, at this season, to the disputes in which you may be involved, and the enmities which you nourish in your breasts. If in violation of the precept of St Paul, you have let more than one sun go down upon your wrath, you ought not to suffer the year to expire, till you have forgiven, and, if possible, are reconciled to, your enemies. Now is the time to take off the burden from those, who have so long groaned under the weight of your oppression. Now is the time to discharge from the prison the debtor, with whom you have been so greatly exasperated, and who, whatever his will may be, is unable to pay you. Now is the time to pardon those, who have contradicted your opinions ; whose religious or political creeds are different from yours ; whom you have treated with contempt and haughtiness ; or who you think must hate you,

because you know that you hate them. Let the last day of the year see an end of all your feuds ; and when, on the first day of the new year, a day which ought to be devoted to friendly affections, you meet your enemy, salute him kindly. He probably will return your salutation ; and there will be immediately removed from your bosoms a sting of hatred, from which you have felt nothing but torment.

6. As the end of the year reminds you, that life is drawing to a close, I would exhort you to reflect on the rapidity of time, and the instability of human things. Youth is flying away ; and with many of you old age is fast approaching. You already touch the borders of infirmity ; and have little space left to finish the task, which your Maker has assigned. Before another year terminates, several of you will be numbered among the dead ; and your state of probation in this world will be completed. As the victims of death are unknown, you ought all of you to apprehend, that he will aim at you individually, and you ought to stand prepared to meet his dart. You ought to put on the whole armor of God, that is, every Christian virtue, which will render your souls invulnerable. When you die, there will to you be an end of the world itself. Whether the heavens and earth, which now are, are still to last many thousand years, or whether, according to the expectation of some, they are soon to be involved in a general conflagration, is the same thing to you : you will have no share in the events, which take place after your decease ; but when you are once covered with dust, you will be lost to all earthly concerns ; and you will sleep in the grave until the resurrection. The day of judgment will seem to you to be at the distance

of a moment : you will lie down, and suddenly awake, and be summoned to appear before the bar of your judge, where you must give a true account of all that you have done on earth. Happy will it be for you, if you can lift up your heads with conscious innocence when you stand before his tribunal, if your transitory life has not been stained with guilt, if your hearts have been free from malice and impiety.

7. Many of your friends are already departed, and have left in your bosoms a tender regret. I exhort you to cherish these melancholy and affectionate sentiments. Recall the image of your venerable father, to whom you are indebted for the education which you have received ; who taught you to love the truth, to be an honest man, to be active and useful. Think of the fond partiality, with which, after a short absence, he always welcomed your return ; of his solicitude to guard you against temptation ; of the anxious hope, which he so often expressed, that you would do honor to his name. Let the image of your mother rise up at the same time, encompassed with that mild light, which shines round the female character. Reflect on the care with which she watched over your early years ; on her sorrow, when you were sick ; on her alarms, when you were in danger ; and on the joy which she manifested, when you were safe and happy. Recollect the attention, which she paid to your health, your wants, your manners, and your morals ; and whilst you give thanks to God for having bestowed on you so excellent a parent, offer up an humble prayer, that he will grant you strength to imitate her virtues, — her discretion, her meekness, her love of order, her purity, her soft compassion, her fervid devotion. — At this sea-

son also revive the remembrance of the friend of your youth, whom you loved as your own soul. Let the heart-felt scenes, through which you passed, return to your imagination:—the walk in the silent grove; the lively conversation, which began, as soon as you had quitted its awful shades; the active sports, which were rendered still more charming, because they were enjoyed in company with him; the studies, in which you assisted each other; his ardor, his generosity, his inexhaustible kindness. He now sleeps in the dust; but let him not be forgotten. His form will return to your memory, not such as it once presented itself to your view, when the morning of your days was gilded with the beams of hope; but the contemplation of it will soften and improve your heart.—Let the season also be consecrated to the memory of the children, whom you have lost: of the son, whom you fondly hoped would be the support of your declining years; of the tender infants whose sweet smiles and playful innocence must be still fresh in your remembrance. They are dead; but they are not annihilated. Their names are preserved in your family records: read them over, when you return home; and mix with your sighs a prayer, that God would permit you to see them once more in that celestial region, where little children dwell, and where their angels do always behold the face of their heavenly Father.

8. The remembrance of your friends will introduce the recollection of your ancestors, who first landed on your shores at this season of the year. This pious duty is productive of many virtues. I would exhort you to reflect on their toils and sufferings, and on the pains that

they took to secure to you the pleasant land, which you inhabit. Whilst you avoid their faults, which were not peculiar to them, but which may be justly charged on the age in which they lived, their bigotry, their intolerance, — endeavor to imitate their virtues, — their industry, their prudence, their sobriety, their peaceable submission to the laws, their respect to their magistrates, their love of truth, and their sacred regard to the institutions of religion. You in the present day enjoy more light than was given to them, who had hardly escaped the darkness of the middle ages. Instead therefore of resting at the point, which they attained, you ought, in imitation of their spirit, to go on; not to believe what they believed, but to believe what men of such inquiring minds would have believed, if they had lived in the nineteenth century.

9. Your benefactors also of a later period should not be forgotten. You should gratefully recollect the statesmen, the patriots, the soldiers, the heroes, who defended your rights, and who finally established your freedom and independence. Some of them are still left to receive your thanks; but ere long every potent arm among them will be chained in death. One of the best and bravest\* of them died in the present year; and the hoary heads of those, who survive, warn you that you cannot retain any of them but a few days. — You should in particular remember the extraordinary man, who led your armies, and during several years presided in your councils, and who died at this season. Though, while he lived, his prudence was censured by the rash, and his

\* General Lincoln, who died May 9, 1810.



moderation was condemned by the envious, who coveted the high honors to which he had risen ; yet now that the grave is closed on him forever, the voice of calumny is dumb, and no trace is left in your minds, except that of his virtues. The remembrance of the independence, which he achieved for you, and of the unexampled prosperity, which your country enjoyed during his administration, can never be effaced ; but it will last in your annals as long as your nation exists. Many of you have seen his majestic form ; but to your children, who have been denied this advantage, you should present his image for their contemplation. While they view it with delight, say to them, This is the man whose character you should imitate. Be prudent, firm, intrepid, and honorable, like him ; love your country, and like him, devote your whole lives to its service. This counsel you ought to give, because on the youth of our nation depend almost all our hopes. They are not yet corrupted with the malignity of party spirit ; nor have they grown hardened in the ways of political iniquity. With the ardor and noble feelings, which are natural to their age, they admire what is excellent and sublime in moral character. If they can be preserved from the false opinions and selfish depravity, with which a larger commerce with the world is too apt to infect the mind ; and in particular, if they can be induced to venerate and imitate the most perfect models, there will still be a chance, that our country may be saved from the overwhelming destruction, in which other nations are involved.

10. Finally, my brethren, I exhort you in a word : obey the command of St Peter in the text : The end of

all things is at hand ; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer : That is, be temperate, vigilant, and devout. Do not immoderately indulge yourselves in any of the pleasures of this transitory life. Let not your affections be placed on the world ; but let your hearts be in heaven, where your treasure is. Watch, and be constantly on your guard against the allurements of sin, that they may not draw you aside from the path of your duty. Above all, be pious : pray with earnestness and without ceasing for strength to perform your good resolutions : let God be the supreme object of your love : let his will be the rule of all your actions. These principles, deeply fixed in your minds, will enable you to live in a state of constant preparation for death ; so that when it arrives, it will not be an evil. If you regard this life in the just light, in which it ought to be viewed, as a preparation for a better, you will not be filled with despondency, because it is soon to come to an end ; but like a traveller, who is returning, through a strange country, to his own home, you will look forward with eagerness and hope to the termination of your journey, and suffer no enticement to divert you from your straight course. — The year ends ; and it ends with serious and gloomy reflections ; but it is followed immediately by a new year, in which you renew your cheerfulness and joy : In like manner, when this life ends, it is succeeded by another ; and if it is not your own fault, by a life of exquisite and everlasting felicity.

**Last Sunday of the Year.**

## NOTE TO SERMON VII.

### NOTE [I.] p. 89.

THE southwest is the pleasantest wind, which blows in New England. In the month of October, in particular, after the frosts, which commonly take place at the end of September, it frequently produces two or three weeks of fair weather, in which the air is perfectly transparent, and the clouds, which float in a sky of the purest azure, are adorned with brilliant colors. If at this season a man of an affectionate heart and ardent imagination should visit the tombs of his friends, the southwestern breezes, as they breathe through the glowing trees, would seem to him almost articulate. Though he might not be so wrapt in enthusiasm, as to fancy that the spirits of his ancestors were whispering in his ear; yet he would at least imagine that he heard the small voice of God. This charming season is called the Indian Summer, a name which is derived from the natives, who believe that it is caused by a wind, which comes immediately from the court of their great and benevolent God Cautantowwit, or the southwestern God, the God, who is superior to all other beings, who sends them every blessing which they enjoy, and to whom the souls of their fathers go after their decease.

## SERMON VIII.

THE YEAR AND ITS DIVISIONS.

---

GEN. I. 14.

AND GOD SAID, LET THERE BE LIGHTS IN THE FIRMAMENT OF HEAVEN, TO DIVIDE THE DAY FROM THE NIGHT; AND LET THEM BE FOR SIGNS, AND FOR SEASONS, AND FOR DAYS, AND YEARS.

THE beginning of a new year suggests to the mind many reflections. Among others it calls the attention to that arrangement of the earth and the heavenly bodies, which causes the seasons, the year itself, and the several parts into which it is divided. A consideration of this subject will lead us to a justification of the ways of God.

The heavenly bodies, beside affording light and heat to the earth, fertility to the ground, health to the atmosphere, and rendering the world a convenient and pleasant habitation to men and other animals, serve also to produce the seasons, and several of the divisions, which are made in the year. By the diurnal revolution of the earth on its axis is effected the natural distinction of day and night, and of evening, midnight, morning, and noon; but the divisions of the day into hours, minutes, and seconds, is the work of man, the convenience of which he soon learned, and the utility of which has been con-

firmed by long experience. The distinction of weeks is in like manner not pointed out by any motion of the luminaries of heaven, but results from the appointment, not of man, but of God, who, according to the Mosaic history, enacted it by a positive law, when he disposed the earth in the order, in which it now appears. The distinction of months was, as the name implies, suggested by the revolution of the moon in its orbit; whilst that of the year is nothing else than a complete revolution of the earth, when, after a certain period, it returns to the point of its orbit, from which it began its course. The seasons are produced by the inclination of the axis of the earth to the plane of its orbit; and their unequal length, that is, that summer is somewhat longer than winter, proceeds from this cause, that the orbit of the earth is not a circle, but an ellipsis, in consequence of which it moves with greater rapidity during the cold, than during the hot season of the year.

A man, who looks at nature with an attentive eye, will observe in it many correspondences. Some of these correspondences are of necessity; and others appear to be the effect of positive institution. Of the former are all geometrical relations, and the harmony of numbers; as, to give only one example, the harmony which exists between numbers in arithmetical and geometrical progression, from which is derived the whole doctrine of logarithms. Every person present will recollect many instances of correspondence, which seem to be of positive institution, in the art or science with which he is best acquainted. A man, who has frequently contemplated with delight these correspondences, may perhaps

be ready to expect them where he will look for them in vain ; or at least he may wish that they were still more numerous. In particular, he would be not a little pleased, if an exact harmony was to be found between the motions of the earth and the moon, and the apparent diurnal and annual revolutions of the sun. If he was to give a theoretical account of what he would choose the year and its divisions to be, he would say,--The year consists of an even number of months, and of days, without any fractions. The motions of the moon and earth are so exactly accommodated to each other, that the last day of the last month is the last day of the year. Eight is a number, which can be evenly divided forever : there are therefore eight months in the year. The moon revolves round the earth, from change to change, precisely in sixty-four days ; which are conveniently distributed into eight weeks : so that the year consists of eight months, sixty-four weeks, and five hundred and twelve days. For the sake of producing the variety of the seasons, the axis of the earth is inclined to the plane of its orbit ; but this orbit is a circle ; and consequently the seasons are of equal lengths. Such an arrangement prevents the painful labors of the astronomer ; chronology is freed from all its embarrassments ; golden numbers and other hard words, which would puzzle the heads of the unlearned, are unknown ; every man, without any mathematical skill, can make his own almanac ; the length of the year is the same in all ages and countries ; and there can be no necessity of ever reforming the calendar.

A theory of this sort is apt to enter the mind of a man, who thinks, but who does not think profoundly. With Alphonso, king of Castile, who lived at a period

when the science of astronomy was imperfectly understood, he may be ready to say, 'The universe is strangely made; if I had been consulted, I could have arranged the heavenly bodies in a more exact order.'

That the actual state of things differs from this theory; that there is no exact correspondence between the motion of the earth and the moon, no harmony between the day and the year, is well known. The year does not comprise a precise number of days, or equal parts of a day; it cannot be measured by any number of moons; nor by any number of weeks, hours, minutes, or even seconds. In consequence of this want of harmony, astronomy is one of the most difficult of all sciences, and chronology is full of perplexities.

Many ages elapsed before even the length of the year was ascertained. They who made it consist of twelve moons, found that the commencement of the year was continually moving backward, from winter to autumn, and from summer to spring. He therefore, who first conjectured that it contained three hundred and sixty days, was supposed to possess great sagacity: and still wiser was he thought, who approached nearer, by adding five days more. An illustrious action of a renowned conqueror was the invention of the leap-year. But neither was his year exact; for after the lapse of a number of centuries, the calendar was perceived to have fallen again into confusion; so that it became necessary to reform it once more; which was accordingly done by Pope Gregory XIII. The Gregorian year is that which is now in use; but even this measurement, though it approaches very near to the truth, is not exact; for after many thousand years have passed away, should the world exist so long, another reformation of the calendar will be



required. In the mean while, the period of a month, though it was first suggested by, is somewhat longer than the revolution of the moon ; and it cannot be divided into an equal number of weeks. The months themselves are not of the same length ; and the commencement of the year is placed arbitrarily, and not on the days, when the sun crosses the equinoctial line, nor on the days, when it is either at its greatest or least distance from the earth.

Thus irregular is the year. Happily however, in the present state of knowledge, no evils whatever result from this irregularity. We have calendars of time as exact, as if astronomy was the easiest of sciences : and though every man cannot calculate his own almanac, yet, when it is made for him by the learned, it can be rendered intelligible to a simple capacity. The Being, who gives motion to the earth and the heavenly bodies, could undoubtedly have arranged them in a different order, so as that there should have been more points of harmony and coincidence between them : but in the arrangement, which exists, his power and wisdom are sufficiently displayed. If the duration of the year could be measured by a precise number of days and moons, men would be ready to overlook the Author of nature, and would no more perceive his hand, than they now perceive it in the harmony of numbers, which is believed to be independent of his will, and to be the result of the necessary relation of things : but when they learn, that to a certain number of days must be added hours, minutes, seconds, and fractions of seconds, to complete the year, and that this measure continues the same, without the smallest variation, from age to age ; they are obliged

to confess that it must proceed from the positive institution of a divine agent, and that he holds a balance, which is so exquisitely exact, as to weigh the most ponderous masses of matter, not only to tons, but to scruples and grains. But whilst, on the one hand, the heavenly luminaries, amidst their seeming irregularity, manifest his power and wisdom : they are not, on the other hand, destitute of harmonies, in which the same divine attributes are discerned : as, to mention no other, the perfect correspondence which exists, without the variation of the thousandth part of a second, between the motion of the moon on its axis, and its monthly revolution in its orbit ; in consequence of which it always presents the same face to the earth.

The relations which the sun, moon, and earth bear to each other display the power and wisdom of God ; and their apparent want of correspondence is not without its uses to man. Man is a creature, who is so constituted by his Maker, that his growth and health, his happiness, his dignity, and perfection are the results of corporeal and mental labor. Almost all the gifts of heaven are presented to him, as it were, in a rude state, to be improved by his skill and industry ; and in proportion as these gifts are more precious, or more ennobling to his nature, they call for greater exertions of the body or mind. This observation will be found to be just, if it is applied to agriculture, to navigation, or to any of the useful arts ; to jurisprudence, to the philosophy of the mind, or to any of the elevated sciences. The Father of the human race has not only bestowed on man the materials of knowledge, but he has also conferred on him invention and genius, by which he has power to combine

them together in such order, as to promote his own felicity, and to produce the most beautiful results ; and there is no science, however high, which he does not seem capable of attaining, and of enlarging and improving without limits.

Previous to a knowledge of the actual fact, it was to be expected therefore, that a science so sublime as astronomy, which expands the soul with the conception of infinity, should not be exempt from a law to which others are subject, and should not be abandoned to the discoveries of the simple and illiterate, to be understood by them without any mental exertion. The Author of nature has not in this instance deviated from his usual course ; but that he might dignify the minds of the noblest of his children, and excite the inventions of their industry and genius, he has removed the correspondences which exist between many other parts of his works. He has formed the heavens according to an exquisite plan ; but to the undiscerning eye they appear a maze which perplexes the understanding. At length, however, after many laborious efforts of the wise, and after he has sent down from his throne such men as Copernicus, Kepler, and Newton, to enlighten the world, the whole is comprehended ; every part of the universe is found to stand in the situation in which it ought to be placed ; and the devout heart is filled with admiration and gratitude, in contemplating the immense power, wisdom, and goodness of God. Thus we see him everywhere, at home and abroad, on the earth and in the sky ; and it is the end of all the sciences, and of astronomy in particular, to introduce us into his presence. Let us ever therefore love, and praise, and adore that glorious Being,

who by his excellent wisdom made the heavens ; who hath made great lights, the sun to rule by day, and the moon and the stars to govern the night ; for his mercy endureth forever.

New Year.

## SERMON IX.

WHAT ADVANTAGE HAVE CHRISTIANS ABOVE THE GENTILES  
OF ANCIENT TIMES.

---

ISAIAH LX. 1, 2, 3.

ARISE, SHINE; FOR THY LIGHT IS COME, AND THE GLORY OF THE LORD IS RISEN UPON THEE. FOR BEHOLD, THE DARKNESS SHALL COVER THE EARTH, AND GROSS DARKNESS THE PEOPLE: BUT THE LORD SHALL ARISE UPON THEE, AND HIS GLORY SHALL BE SEEN UPON THEE. AND THE GENTILES SHALL COME TO THY LIGHT, AND KINGS TO THE BRIGHTNESS OF THY RISING.

IN the text, Isaiah, with his usual sublimity, foretells the manifestation of Christ to the gentiles. Not only he, but other prophets predict it; and it is a theme, on which the writers of the New Testament, and in particular St Paul, dwell with great delight. We have so long been a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that we now consider this privilege as our birthright, and are too often unmindful of the extent of the blessing. It is necessary therefore to direct our attention to it, that our hearts may be impressed with gratitude to God, and that we may show forth the praises of him, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Many parts of the world now enjoy the bright beams of divine revelation; but there was a time, when it was confined to one favored spot, and when darkness covered

the rest of the earth, and gross darkness the people. If we had not been graciously taken out of this state, instead of adoring with sacrifices of love the benevolent Father of the universe, we should be the terrified worshippers of Woden, Thor, and Friga, and the other barbarous gods of our Saxon ancestors. But let us arise and shine : for the light of the gospel is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon us : and we gentiles are come to the light of the sun of righteousness, and our kings to the brightness of his rising.

- As God is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works, the dispensation, by which one nation is favored with the knowledge of the truth, and all others are left in ignorance and error, is somewhat mysterious. The best solution of this difficulty, is derived from the consideration of what kind of being man is : and this is the solution, which the Scriptures give. Man is a free agent : he has power to go right ; and he has power to go wrong. There can be no doubt, that at the beginning the idolatry of the nations was voluntary : because God in no age of the world has left himself without witness. So St Paul teaches us. That which may be known of God, says he, is manifest in them, for God hath shown it unto them. For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead ; so that they [idolaters] are without excuse. These observations of the Apostle are reasonable ; and they ought to stop the mouth of the objector.

Idolatry and all other sins originate from the wills of men ; but they do not take place without the knowledge

of the Supreme Being. He has wise designs in permitting them to exist; and he mercifully educes good from the greatest evil. Pious and thoughtful men have pointed out many reasons, which rendered it expedient that one nation should be separated for a time from the rest of the world, and chosen as the depositary of the oracles of God. Of these reasons, that which stands pre-eminent is, that preparations were thus made for the coming of the Messiah, and satisfactory evidence afforded of the divinity of his mission.

Because a peculiar people was elected to preserve the knowledge of the unity of God, it does not thence follow, that all other nations were delivered over to the influence of Satan, or to the government of malignant demons: for this supposition cannot be true. The Supreme Being, though not exactly in the same sense, was the God of the Babylonians and Egyptians, of the Greeks and Romans, as well as of the Jews. He rewarded them for their virtues, or punished them for their vices, by prosperity or by adversity, in the same manner as he rewarded or punished the people, over whom he more visibly reigned. What has perplexed the understandings of some Christians, is a question, which is often asked, and which they think themselves unable to answer: Whether there is cause to believe that any of the heathen, who lived before the coming of Christ, and who were unacquainted with divine revelation, can be saved? To this question there are many Christians, in the present age, who do not hesitate a moment what answer to give. They say, that in every nation good men, who make the best use of the knowledge which they possess, are, whatever their external advantages may be, approved by Heaven, and will be rewarded in the other world.



Whilst it is a doctrine of the Bible, that God hath appointed us to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, it teaches that the way, by which men enter into this everlasting life, is not by believing in a mediator, of whom they never heard, and of whom it was impossible that they should hear, but by keeping the commandments. When every part of this divine book declares that God is merciful, that he forgives even the sins of men, and cannot therefore be supposed to punish their ignorance, we dare not to consign to everlasting flames the virtuous heathen of ancient times, who sincerely and diligently framed their lives according to the light of nature and the religions which they had received and which they professed.

The heathen, who, with the exception of a few enlightened men, were deprived of the knowledge of the true God, were incapable of attaining the perfection of virtue: but that they were not entirely destitute of correct notions of morality is manifest from their writings, which are still extant; and in which many examples of fortitude, of contempt of death, of patriotism, of chastity, of hospitality, of justice, sincerity, and the love of truth, of clemency in kings and loyalty in subjects, are exhibited to our view. The works of the ancient Greek philosophers, debased, it is confessed, with absurd theories, contain valuable precepts, from the perusal of which even Christians might derive advantage. Among the productions of the Romans, the Offices of Cicero, though it must be allowed to be inferior to the treatises of the moderns, who have enjoyed the light of the gospel, is yet an excellent system of ethics. I do not insist on the works of Epictetus, a Greek, and Seneca, a Latin writer, whose ideas of morals were still more complete; because both of them lived after the birth of Jesus; and though neither of

them mentions his name, yet possibly they might have been indirectly indebted for their more correct sentiments to the light, which the Christian religion had diffused over the world. But however this may be, it is a fact, which cannot be disputed, that the ancients in some measure comprehended the subject of morals, and faithfully performed many acts of virtue.

That they must of necessity have done so, is evident, because it is not possible to conceive, how a family, city, republic, or any society, whether large or small, can subsist without the knowledge and practice of morality. In a family there must be a husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters; from which relations necessarily arise the duties of filial obedience, conjugal fidelity, and parental and fraternal love. That the heathen sometimes neglected these duties, must be confessed; but unless they had been frequently discharged, families would soon have fallen to pieces, and the human race would have disappeared from the face of the earth. In like manner in a city, men in their intercourse with each other must have generally observed the rules of truth and honesty: falsehood and fraud must in ancient times, as they are now, have been rare and monstrous; otherwise confidence being destroyed, all mutual connexion would have ceased. In a republic also, the citizens in general must have been subject to the laws, and the magistrates in general must have administered them with impartiality and justice; otherwise there would have been an end of all government, and there could have been no tie to bind the several parts of it together. If therefore many of the heathen performed these duties, what right have we to say that they were not good men, and that they were not blessed by God in this world, and that they will not be rewarded in the other?

Whilst, however, this truth, that many of the heathen were virtuous, is established by indisputable facts, and just deductions from the known qualities of human nature, and from the relations which necessarily exist among men. — it must at the same time be admitted, that the summit of moral perfection among them was far below that, to which the Christian aspires. Their absurd idolatries debased all their virtues. Many of them possessed the good qualities, which I have ascribed to them : but of the moral graces, which are peculiar to the Christian, and which are his most splendid ornaments, they had an imperfect conception. They were in particular deficient in that comprehensive virtue, which in the New Testament is styled charity or love. We find few traces among them of disinterestedness, of sympathy, of compassion.

Hence it is that so few of the writings of the ancients are interesting, or appear pathetic to a modern reader, whose moral taste has been refined, and whose heart has been softened, by the instructions of the gospel. There are in their works scenes of distress, but not many of tenderness. Their fictitious tales, which were undoubtedly composed with the design of impressing the hearts of the most dignified part of mankind, and of exciting noble and virtuous sentiments, enable us more accurately than any other works to ascertain the standard of morals, as it was fixed among them. Of these fictitious tales, the epic poems of Homer and Virgil, the three which are the most renowned, have fortunately been handed down to posterity. These romances, for the melody of their verse, and the art and genius which they display, have in all ages been the admiration and delight of men of taste : but if we look for exalted virtue in them, we shall

be disappointed in our expectation. The poets, who invented them, were at liberty to feign what they pleased; and they intended to make their heroes as perfect, as was consistent with probability: but whilst they were magnanimous, how sadly deficient were they in the virtues, which interest the heart!

In the *Iliad*, the only character, who excites much esteem, or for whom we feel much concern, is Hector. His parting interview with Andromache is natural and affecting. We pity his fate, and applaud his courage: and we give all due praise to the virtue, which he displayed, the love of his child and of the wife of his bosom. There is in the *Iliad* one scene, which was capable of being wrought up to a high pitch of tenderness and generosity; and we cannot forbear regretting that on this occasion Homer was not inspired with a portion of the godlike spirit, which animates the breast of a Christian. When we see Priam go by night to the tent of Achilles, to beg the slaughtered body of his son; when we behold the stern eye of the hero melting into tears at the view of the afflicted father, we expect that something noble will ensue: but the whole scene ends in disappointment, and leaves a chill in the affections; for Achilles at last, though he grants his request, appears to be influenced, more by the costly presents which Priam brought, than by any compassion that he feels, or the eloquent intreaties of the wretched old man.\*

In the *Odyssey*, which is a still more entertaining romance than the *Iliad*, the fidelity of Eumæus, the filial piety of Telemachus, and the chastity of Penelope merit

\* Marmontel, after censuring with just severity the conduct of Achilles on this occasion, adds, "Heroism was never less known than in the age which has been called heroic."

our approbation ; but Ulysses, the hero of the poem, is a plausible, subtle, and cruel man. A subtle and cruel man is a character, whom every Christian must abhor ; and we cannot for a moment rejoice in his success.

The cold character of Æneas, in Virgil's elegant romance, is not, even by the majesty of verse, made interesting to the heart. His treacherous dereliction of Dido, and his unlawful attempt to deprive Turnus, not only of his kingdom, but of his betrothed wife, destroy all sympathy with a hero, who is meant to be described as a model of piety and magnanimity.

It would have been in the power of these renowned poets to have made their romances much more interesting and pathetic, if they had been acquainted with the system of morals which is contained in the gospel. It was not their fault, that they had not more exalted ideas of virtue ; but it was the misfortune of the age in which they lived, and of the religion which they professed.

The fictitious tales of the moderns are much more affecting to the heart ; and they are indebted for the strong interest, which they excite, principally to the high standard of morals, which the Christian religion has raised. Tenderness and benevolence are displayed in their most popular scenes. The heroes are generous and disinterested ; and the heroines, compassionate and charitable. These productions are often frivolous, and sometimes mischievous ; they should therefore be selected with caution : but with all their faults, as a class of books, they establish one important fact, that the moral taste of men in the present age is much more correct, than it was in ancient times ; for which no adequate cause except this can be assigned, that they are no longer Gentiles, but Christians. For as the design of the authors of these

books is to interest their readers, they are obliged to conform their works to prevailing opinions and feelings : and they cannot effect this purpose by any other means than by endowing their principal characters with the sublime virtues, which are enjoined in the New Testament. Thus do they add one more proof to the many others which exist, that Christianity is the most perfect, the most improving, of all religions.

If therefore the question is asked, What has the gospel done ? the answer is, that it has doomed no virtuous Gentile to the abyss of everlasting destruction ; for the Son of man is come, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them : it has depressed no good man, who without any fault of his own is deprived of its light ; but it has exalted all, by whom it is received and obeyed. It has created a new order of beings with enlarged capacities ; it has lifted their eyes to heaven, and enkindled in their souls the flame of divine love ; it has raised the character of human nature higher, than it ever was before ; it has refined and ennobled men, and made them kings and priests unto God.

But as man still retains his free agency, it is in the power of Christians to abuse these inestimable privileges. I would therefore exhort you, disciples of Jesus, to be mindful of your high and holy calling. Remember that you are placed on an elevated part of the mountain of God ; and that if your feet slip your fall will be deplorable. Look not behind you, but upward, before you. With heroic ardor and generous zeal press forward, and strive to attain the summit ; that thence you may ascend to the regions of everlasting bliss, which are prepared for the righteous.

Epiphany.

# SERMON X.

THE MARRIAGE IN CANA.

---

JOHN II. 1, 2.

THERE WAS A MARRIAGE IN CANA OF GALILEE; AND THE MOTHER OF JESUS WAS THERE; AND BOTH JESUS WAS CALLED, AND HIS DISCIPLES, TO THE MARRIAGE.

Among the variety of human characters, there are two, which form a striking contrast with each other. In the first gayety of heart is predominant. The impressions which are made on them are pleasurable, but do not reach beneath the surface. They pursue no fixed plan, and are not deeply interested in anything which takes place. Their ear is tuned to the sharp key in music; and their eye is formed to delight in brilliant and changing objects. Frequently innocent, and sometimes positively good, they can never be styled great; and they deserve not to be considered in a more respectable light than as children of a larger growth.

In the other characters seriousness is the prevailing trait. The impressions which are made on these men, are deep and lasting. Not a nerve is touched, but it vibrates through their whole frame. They are charmed with the sublime objects of nature, with solemn and melancholy sounds. They delight in retiring into a desert



or to the summit of a high mountain to pray; and they frequently almost lose sight of the material world, whilst their minds are absorbed in God. Their designs are in a high degree important; and their manners and conduct are uniformly grave and dignified.

Of this latter cast of character was Jesus Christ. The majesty of seriousness reigned in his mind. He sometimes wept: but no sentiment of levity, no instance of gayety, no sprightly sally, is recorded by the writers of his life. The important business, which his Father assigned him, precluded all light thoughts. A consciousness that he was acting under the eye of God seems constantly to have filled his mind; and with this sacred persuasion, overlooking every trifling object, the awe of devotion, the sublimity of great designs occupied his heart.

Besides, the idea of the painful death which he was ordained to suffer, and which he clearly foresaw, must often have oppressed his soul with the deepest melancholy. How could a man be cheerful, who knew that he was soon to expire on a cross; and who was compelled by his overwhelming fears to utter such language as this: Father, let this cup pass from me; Father, save me from this hour?

The character of Jesus was grave and serious, melancholy and sublime: but it was not sullen and rigid. He did not forbid others to be cheerful. It has been common in the founders of false religions to affect a remarkable degree of austerity; but the author of our religion can on no occasion be accused of this affectation. He joined in innocent festivals; and readily accepted the invitations, which he received, to partake of entertainments. Of this several instances are given by the evangelists; and they are written for our instruction, that we may

learn from them, that true religion does not consist in austerity of manners, penances, and mortification, but in purity of heart, sanctity of morals, and unaffected devotion.

Omitting the other instances, which are recorded in the Gospels, I would request your attention to the narrative, which has furnished me with the subject of my discourse. It exhibits a feature of our Saviour's character : and like every other part of his perfect example, it indirectly conveys several important precepts.

There was in Cana a marriage feast, to which Jesus, his mother, and disciples were invited. Though he knew that on such occasions, the hearts of the guests are commonly very cheerful, yet he did not refuse the invitation ; and he appears to have made no attempt to interrupt the innocent mirth of the company. The wine, which was provided for the entertainment, being exhausted, the mother of Jesus informed him of the circumstance ; and doubting not that he would be graciously pleased to afford his assistance, she called the servants to her, and bade them to do whatever he should order. Jesus commanded them to fill six large water-pots with water : which being done, it was immediately changed into the purest wine.

Thus did the great Messiah, not only sanction by his presence the cheerfulness of an innocent feast, but even exert his miraculous power to augment the joy of the guests. Thus did he demonstrate that he is no enemy to the happiness of man ; and that his religion is not designed to abridge our social pleasures, or to deprive us of a single source of rational enjoyment.

This miracle was exhibited before he entered on his

public ministry ; and he manifested the same indulgent spirit, after his time was come, and he openly showed himself as the Messiah. The solemn and hypocritical Pharisees, who disfigured their faces, for a pretence made long prayers, and appeared outwardly religious, objected against him a conduct, which was such a severe censure on their own. They charged him with being a glutton and drunkard, and a friend of publicans and sinners ; but the purity of his character defeated these insinuations. As they dealt only in general invectives, and could not allege against him any act of intemperance, the slander fell on the head of its authors. It is true, that he was a friend of publicans and sinners ; he conversed with them, however, not for the sake of authorizing their corrupt practices, but of reforming and saving them. His benignity was diffused on all ; but it resembled the pure element of light, which is not contaminated by the objects on which it shines.

If we compare the unaffected and indulgent conduct of Jesus with the part performed by some of the ancient heathen philosophers, who by their rigid maxims and savage austerity of manners endeavored to gain admirers, the character of the author of our religion will rise exceedingly in our estimation. The founders of the Cynic sect of philosophers clothed themselves in vile and ragged garments ; in summer they rolled themselves on the burning sand ; in winter they walked with naked feet on the ice, and at all seasons ate the most unpalatable food. They taught their disciples to despise, not merely luxury, but everything which adorns human society, such as poetry, eloquence, architecture, and in general all the elegant sciences and ornamental arts. Whilst we justly

view with contempt their affected austerity, we may triumphantly ask, Can anything of this kind be alleged against Jesus of Nazareth?

Apollonius Tyanaeus, who lived in the first century, has sometimes, by the enemies of the gospel, been compared with, or even preferred to Jesus Christ: but what were the distinguishing excellences of this proud philosopher? He suffered his beard and hair to grow; he wore no shoes; he abstained from wine and the flesh of animals; and he obstinately kept silence during the long period of five years. Such are the acts, which in the opinion of the heathen raised him above the sublime Messiah.

Not only among the heathen, but even among Christians, there have been men, who have hoped to attract admiration, and become leaders of parties, by a rigid opposition to lawful pleasure. From this cause principally arose the monasteries, which during many ages proved so heavy a burden on society. The Christian religion however is not chargeable with any of these abuses; and Jesus, its founder, has condemned them, not only by his doctrine, but, in the most pointed manner, by his example.

This part of Saint John's Gospel then is valuable; because it exhibits our Saviour as indulgent to the innocent pleasures of men; and consequently proves that the founder of our religion was exempt from fanaticism, affectation and hypocrisy. But this is not the only instruction, which we can derive from it: it also displays another, and still more important feature in his character. It shows that he was the great teacher sent from God, and that he employed every opportunity to communi-

cate his heavenly lessons, and to confirm his divine mission. The miracle which he wrought on this occasion, as the Evangelist says, manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him. It demonstrated that he was the Messiah foretold by the prophets, that God was with him and assisted him, and that he had received a commission, which authorized him to become the instructor of the world : and the faith of his disciples was confirmed by the supernatural argument.

Thus in the midst of a joyful company, when mirth and wine were flowing round, was the soul of the great Messiah occupied with serious objects. He did not lose sight a moment, of the important business, which his Father had committed to him ; but all his actions directly tended to advance the glory of God, to confirm his divine religion, and to promote the salvation of men.

The presence of Jesus at the marriage in Cana conveys important lessons to several different classes of persons. It teaches the instructors of religion to avoid an affected gravity and hypocritical austerity of manners. It convinces them, that, like their great Master, they may lawfully join in social parties and innocent festivals. But it solemnly warns them not to give way to ungodly mirth, not to violate the sanctity of the Christian character, and to lose no proper opportunity which presents itself of communicating moral and religious instruction to their associates.

The history imparts a similar lesson to parents, who are charged by God with the education of their children. They should be cheerful and indulgent ; they should partake of the innocent sports of their offspring ; and smile on all their lawful pleasures. But they should not

for a moment forget, that the tender mind stands in perpetual need of cultivation : that if it is not constantly attended to, either the soil will be barren, or weeds will spring up, and choke every useful plant. They therefore should be continually inculcating a regard to truth, diligence in lawful pursuits, obedience to their parents, love to their brothers, and piety to God : and these lessons should be delivered, not in long and formal lectures, which are always tedious to the young : but in short hints, agreeable allusions to the visible objects of nature, entertaining narratives, and above all by their own correct example.

Finally, to men in general this history affords useful information. It teaches you all, my brethren, to yield your faith, obedience, and homage to the Christian religion, the author of which was so unaffected and wise a character, so indulgent to the innocent pleasures of society, and so exempt from austerity of manners. It proves to you, that the religion, which was introduced with such a splendid miracle, must be from God. It instructs you to love your Saviour with the same ardent love, with which he loved his friends ; and to let gratitude flow from your swelling hearts, in a stream as rich, as generous, as delicious, as the wine which flowed at the marriage in Cana.

2d S. after Epiph.

# SERMON XI.

GOD PARDONS PENITENT SINNERS.

---

ISAIAH LV. 7.

LET THE WICKED FORSAKE HIS WAY, AND THE UNRIGHTEOUS MAN HIS THOUGHTS; AND LET HIM RETURN UNTO THE LORD, AND HE WILL HAVE MERCY UPON HIM, AND TO OUR GOD, FOR HE WILL ABUNDANTLY PARDON.

SUCH passages of the sacred oracles as the words, which I have now read, are most attended to by the humble Christian, whose anxious inquiry is, how he shall obtain the favor of the Supreme Being. In the Scriptures there are difficulties, which an unenlightened believer cannot easily solve; there are texts, which are dark, and hard to be understood. Critical skill in the dead languages, a knowledge of ancient customs, and, in a word, comprehensive learning, are necessary for their explanation. But happily these passages have little connexion with practice. A Christian can find his way to heaven, although he cannot determine what they mean; for he has, for the direction of his steps, such lights as the text, in which his duty is plainly pointed out.

In the prophecy of Isaiah there are many obscurities. It cannot always be decided, whether the Prophet is speaking of the state of the Jews, or of the Christian church under the reign of the Messiah: but this text is



perfectly clear; and whether addressed to the Jews only, or to other nations, it is applicable to all men. Every offender is encouraged by it to repent of his sins, and humbly to seek the mercy of God.

The doctrine of the text is this, that if a wicked man will repent of his sins, alter his course of life, and obey the commandments of God, he shall obtain forgiveness from his Maker. This is one of the most important and consoling truths made known by divine revelation. I mean not at present to inquire, whether it could have been discovered by the light of nature: on this point there are different opinions: we need not perplex ourselves with them: it is sufficient for us that the Bible declares, that a repentant sinner has everything to hope from the mercy of God.

Though we decline considering this particular question, it may perhaps be necessary to observe, that it is not inconsistent with the justice of God to forgive sinners on their repentance. A number of Christians have supposed, that divine justice cannot pardon a sinner, unless, in addition to his reformation, full satisfaction is also made, in another way, for all his past offences. But does not this supposition deprive the Supreme Being of the attribute of mercy? Where full satisfaction is made, pardon is not an act of mercy, but of equity. It is impossible that a man should atone for his past transgressions in any other way, than by changing his conduct. In this case, ceasing to be what he formerly was, punishment becomes unnecessary. Sufficient honor is done to the perfection of the divine law by the sinner, who by his conversion declares, that it is a good law and ought to be obeyed. Mercy therefore may reasonably be extended toward him; nor can justice forbid that it should be.

What is the end of the Deity in the government of the world? Is it not to make men happy by making them virtuous? When therefore they become so, when they cease to be vicious, what good purpose can it answer to render them miserable? Why should any metaphysical ideas of the justice of God lead us to suppose, that they who are now holy, who abhor their former characters, and who sincerely resolve never to repeat their crimes, are unworthy of the divine mercy, and ought to be punished with unutterable torments.

We cannot reasonably suppose it. We ought then to receive the text in its simple and obvious meaning. We ought to believe that God will forgive the sinner on his repentance, without any other condition. This, as I have suggested, is the doctrine of the Scriptures. One design of our Saviour's mission into the world was to make this truth known; as the Prophet teaches us in this chapter: I have given him, says God, for a witness to the people — and his instruction is — Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found; call upon him, while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and return unto the Lord; and he will have mercy on him.

This doctrine of the Scriptures, that God forgives the repentant sinner, which is so positively asserted in the text, leads us to make several interesting reflections.

1. In the first place, it exhibits the character of our heavenly Father in the most amiable light, and induces us to love him above all objects. The foundation of true piety is just and honorable ideas of the benevolence of God. When we think of him only as a Being, who is arrayed with terror and armed with vengeance, we fear, but we do not love him. It is to his goodness that

we give our affection : or, to express myself in the language of St John, we love him, because he first loved us. His unbounded benevolence is our consolation and support. Upon his benevolence we depend with security : and we trust we are in the hands of a God, who continually delights to do us good. His mercy is the most amiable modification of his benevolence. His benevolence leads him to love his creatures in general ; but his mercy induces him to love them, who have offended him, who are his enemies, who are unworthy of his love. In what strong terms is this represented in the text ! God will have mercy upon the sinner : he will *abundantly* pardon him. There are many other affecting passages of the same kind in the sacred volume. The Lord, says Moses, is long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression. To the same purpose the Psalmist speaks : The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide ; neither will he keep his anger forever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins ; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. Can we forbear to love a Being, who is so compassionate ? Can we forbear to comply with the easy terms, which are necessary to obtain his favor ?

2. The mercy of God ought to lead us to repentance. If, when we had sinned, our doom was irrevocably fixed, and we had no hope of obtaining pardon, we should have nothing to do but to give ourselves up to despair, and not make any useless efforts to retrieve our character. But the Bible declares, that there is room for hope, that there are still many motives for exertion. It teaches us that it is never too late to attempt a reforma-

tion. God will forgive not only one offence but innumerable transgressions. Though we have rendered our souls as scarlet with sin ; yet God will make them, if we are humble and contrite, whiter than the pure wool. For his thoughts are not our thoughts ; neither are his ways our ways. *We* cannot easily forgive, when we have been repeatedly injured ; but [the compassion of God is abundant in pardon ; and though we grievously offend him, yet if we return and repent, he will still forgive us.

Let a knowledge of this important truth induce you, who are bewildered in the mazes of sin, and who are wandering in the paths of destruction, to return, like the penitent prodigal, to the house of your Father. The ways of vice are intricate and dismal. No light, no comfort can be found in them. The pleasures which it promised are soon experienced to be illusions. Your heart is torn with a thousand conflicting passions. Whithersoever you turn, the sharp points of conscience wound your soul. Would you remain in this painful situation, if you believed it possible to escape ? It is possible : divine revelation assures you that it is. The text authorizes me to declare, that there is a passage, through which you can flee : Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Perhaps you are conscious of having been guilty of so many offences, that you think it impossible that you should obtain favor. You fear that you have outlived your day of grace, and that you have now no hope of pardon. But the mercy of God is not limited to any particular number of offences. It is a broad and deep

ocean, of sufficient capacity to receive them all. Look into the sacred history, and you will find that atrocious sinners have been forgiven; the idolatrous Manasseh; the persecuting Paul; Peter, who profanely and ungratefully denied his Master; and even David, who was guilty of the crimes of adultery and murder. Some of these persons became afterward by their eminent virtues the ornaments of human nature. You perceive by these examples, that it is possible to reform, and to efface your sins, however black they may be.

The apprehension, that the mercy of God is limited, is not then a reasonable motive; and it ought to have no influence upon you; there are other causes which obstruct your conversion. You experience that the way of the transgressor is hard; but you are afraid that the way of the righteous man is still more difficult. It is laborious to begin on a new course, and to alter your former habits of life. You have to study the elements of virtue, to learn a new language, the language of heaven, and to unlearn the language of sin, which you now speak. This is a double labor; and you think that it cannot be overcome. But let me beseech you to make the effort. You will find the task easier the further you proceed. God, who is your Master in this great science, will assist you with every necessary instruction; good men will applaud your industry, and animate you to persevere; and unless you acquire this knowledge, you know that you cannot be happy; nay, you are certain that you must inevitably be miserable.

Another cause which may prevent your returning to God is the fear of what the world will say, should you attempt to reform. But what is this world, of which you are so much afraid? Is it composed of the wise and

the good ; of men, whose advice you would ask or follow in any transaction which affected your temporal interest ? Does it consist of persons for whom you have the least esteem ? No : but it is made up of the idle, the impertinent, and the profligate ; men whose understandings are commonly as contemptible, as their morals are depraved. The greatest number of sinners, though they neglect to imitate, will approve your conduct. For virtue is so lovely, that it forces applause even from them, who violate its duties. But if you do not reform, the whole world, including the despicable fragment of it which I have mentioned, will condemn you. The wicked will openly slander you, and even represent your crimes as worse than they are ; and the good, if they do not openly blame you, will at least censure you in their hearts. Whence proceed the severe observations on abandoned characters which you sometimes hear ? You do not find that the vicious are disposed to treat the faults of their erring brothers with compassion, and much less with commendation. I repeat it : you have no reason to be afraid of the world, when you are conscious that you are doing what is right ; for though the world, through misinformation and prejudice, may condemn for a time what it ought not to condemn, yet in general its opinion becomes correct at last.

The most powerful cause, which prevents your reformation, is pride. You are ashamed to acknowledge that you are in a false way ; and you are too obstinate to give up a mode of life, which you have once pursued. It is pride, and not a fear that God wants mercy, which detains so many persons in the way of sin. They are too haughty to bend their knees to the Father of mercies ; they disdain to ask forgiveness even at his hands. There

are persons who confidently pronounce, that they never did anything which is wrong. They acknowledge that human nature is frail ; but they insinuate that they are exempt from fault. In all altercations with their fellow men, in all clashings of interest, they pertinaciously maintain, contrary to justice, and sometimes to the convictions of their own consciences, that they have done nothing, which they ought not to repeat in like circumstances. From such tempers we cannot expect repentance. The obdurate heart must be softened, before it can receive the impressions of virtue. You, whose souls are exalted by pride, may glory in your dignity of character ; but your elevation is imaginary, and without any foundation for its support. The tear of contrition, the bended knee, and the supplicating hands are more honorable to the man who has sinned, than the disdainful eye and the haughty brow.

Since then there are other causes, and not a fear that the mercy of God is limited, which induce you to postpone your reformation, impute not your perseverance in vice to this motive. The merciful God is ever ready to receive you, if you will venture to return to him. Dare not to plead this excuse in justification of your delay. You may abuse the mercy of God, presuming that it is not necessary to apply for it at present, and that it will be time enough to solicit it in a future day. But remember, that in the meanwhile you are adding to your wretchedness, that you are treasuring up accumulated wrath, and that you are rendering your conversion more and more difficult. The task of acquiring good habits must be performed at last, when it will be more laborious, and when you will have less strength than at present. Your pride must be conquered, your will must be

subdued, before you can be made happy. Should that future day, which you promise yourself, never arrive, should you be taken out of the world in the midst of your sins, what have you not to fear? Unless God affords you another trial beyond the grave, you will be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. A possibility so serious ought to alarm you; it should warn you to flee from the wrath to come; and prevail on you to bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

3d S. after Epiph.



## SERMON XII.

GOD REGARDS THE POOR.

---

JOB XXIV, 19.

NOR REGARDETH THE RICH MORE THAN THE POOR; FOR  
THEY ALL ARE THE WORK OF HIS HANDS.

THE words now read are part of the speech of the wise young man, Elihu, to Job. They are in the form of a question; but when they are changed into an affirmation, they express this truth, that God regardeth not the rich more than the poor: for they all are the work of his hands. This sentiment is the subject of the present discourse.

It is not my intention to utter a declamation against wealth: nor shall I attempt to prove, that the poor are happier than the rich. Such an opinion probably would not be admitted by my auditors; and it is not maintained in the text. All which it asserts is, that God does not regard the rich *more* than the poor; which assertion implies only, that the one is regarded as much as the other. That wealth may be productive of happiness, that it is a blessing which descends from heaven is evident. God bestows it on man as the instrument of good; and the evil of it consists in its abuse. To say nothing

of the physical enjoyments, which riches enable a man to purchase ; of the respect which they obtain ; of the rank, which they give him in society ; of the power, which they confer on him of indulging his taste for the fine arts and elegant literature ; all which are innocent pleasures, when the love of them is confined within the bounds of moderation : to say nothing of these things, must not that condition be desirable, which affords to the patriot the means of increasing the strength and welfare of his country ; to the encourager of learning, of endowing schools and colleges ; to the philanthropist, of adding to the comforts and alleviating the miseries of the indigent ; and to the Christian, of advancing the interests of religion, and erecting a temple to the Most High ?

Nor do I mean to assert, that there is no evil in poverty ; for poverty in the extreme must be allowed to be a serious calamity, which calls for the sympathy and benevolent aid of all, who are able to afford it relief. Hunger, and thirst, and cold, and nakedness, cannot by any charm of eloquence or poetry be converted into blessings. Like sickness, and the death of friends, they are afflictions, to which it is the duty of a Christian to submit with patience and pious resignation ; but it is not required of any one, that he should view them as pleasures. That God regards even this lowest class of the poor, that he has wise and gracious designs in the sufferings, which he inflicts on them, must be admitted, if we take into consideration, that there is a future, as well as a present, world ; and that the Author of both worlds is a benevolent Being, who hates nothing, which he has made, who delights not in the misery of his creatures, but like a tender Father pities the wretched. I speak

not of the needy, who are destitute of every comfort : they are not numerous in any country, particularly not here : I confine myself to the poor, who are deprived of the luxuries, and not a few of the conveniences, but still possess the necessities, of life. This class of persons, who constitute the majority in every nation, if they are too much disposed to compare their situation with the condition of the wealthy, may fall into discontent ; and may be ready to imagine, that they are not the objects of the care and kindness of Heaven : but I will endeavor to show, that God does not regard the rich, more than he regards them.

1. I. in the first place, observe, that poverty, in the view which we take of it at present, is the unavoidable result of institutions, which are beneficial to society. If the property, which is in any quarter of the globe, was to be equally divided among its inhabitants, the poor, though they might not be as poor as they are now, would not be made rich. Each man might possess a single acre of land ; which he might cultivate, as well as it could be done in a country, where there was no commerce, no established manufactures, and no large funds. It would be difficult, if not impossible, for him to procure even the necessary implements of husbandry. He would be destitute of many comforts and enjoyments, which the poor now possess. In a word, he would become a savage ; and he would suffer the frequent hunger and other hardships, to which the savage life is exposed. The unequal distribution of property is the principal cause, which renders men industrious ; and it is this inequality, which has given rise to most of the inventions and improvements, that have been made in the arts. It always accompanies a high

degree of civilization, a state, which in spite of everything, that poets may urge in favor of the Indian wigwam, is much to be preferred, even for them who obtain the smallest share of its advantages, to a rude state of nature where riches are unknown. This argument, if there was time for it, might be pursued to a great length ; but I must leave it to your reflections, and satisfy myself with remarking, that the poor cannot doubt that they are regarded by God, when they perceive that their poverty is the effect of a constitution of society, which contributes very much to their benefit.

2. God formed the poor as well as the rich : he has bestowed on them the same nature, the same senses, the same powers of understanding. The differences, which exist between them, are accidental only ; they are not an inferior class of beings ; and if it should be the will of heaven, there is nothing in the constitution, either of their bodies or minds, to prevent them from changing places with each other, an event which indeed is frequently ordered by Providence. The inlets of pleasure are the same with them as with other men ; and their gratifications probably are not fewer in number. They are not more exposed to disease and death : their lives are as long, and as cheerful. From the want of education, their taste may not be as refined as the taste of the rich ; but perhaps they lose nothing by this circumstance : for a refined taste, which is confessedly sometimes productive of a high degree of enjoyment, renders the person, who has acquired it, more difficult to be pleased ; so that he is often disgusted with what delights the uninstructed eye or ear of the poor. If the poor are delighted, they ought not to charge Heaven with unkindness, because wealth has not cut them off from many sources of simple and harmless pleasure.

3. The poor man, it is true, is subjected to perpetual toil ; which he may fear is a sign, that God does not regard him : but toil is the lot of man, and not of the poor man exclusively. We shall find on examination, that the labors of the rich are as irksome, as the labors of the indigent. The wealthy merchant, who plans a voyage, and who is perplexed with the intricacy of accounts, and vexed with the blunders, idleness, or unfaithfulness, of more than one person employed by him, toils at least as hard as the seaman and porter, who receive his wages. There is a pride, perhaps a pleasure, in commanding the services of others ; but there is much more trouble in keeping them at work, than in working ourselves. The task of laborers, who have no other part to perform than to obey the orders given to them, is more simple, less responsible, and less embarrassing ; and if there was not a charm in freedom, which fascinates the human heart, most men would find more enjoyment, as they certainly find more ease, in being guided by others in their pursuit of the necessary provisions of life, than in undertaking to guide themselves. The cares of the poor are not to be named with the anxiety of the rich. The objects, which they have to attend to, being few in number, their minds are not so much agitated with fearful thoughts. After the fatigues of the day, they can lie down on their beds, and enjoy there quietness and repose, without any apprehension of shipwrecks, of insolvent debtors, of robbers, or of ware-houses on fire.

4. Some of the most valuable blessings, which God has bestowed on the human race, are love and friendship ; but these blessings are imparted with liberality to the poor. Among such of them as are virtuous, the mu-

tual tenderness, which is felt and expressed by brothers and sisters, parents and children, husbands and wives, is the source of their highest enjoyments. This affection sweetens all their toils ; and nothing can be more pleasing or more edifying, than to behold the eagerness, with which the industrious man returns to his much loved home, after the labors of the day, and to witness the joy, which he diffuses into the hearts of his delighted family. The rich also, I grant, are not strangers to these pleasures ; and why should they be unknown to them ? Does it lessen the happiness of the poor, that love is found in the splendid mansion, as well as in the lowly cottage ?

5. The gospel is designed for the poor as well as the rich. In imparting this inestimable blessing, there is no respect of persons with God. There may be difficulties in divine revelation, which even learned and enlightened theologians cannot solve : but none of these difficulties relate to its duties, which are simple and easily understood. The poor know what their Maker has required of them : they are acquainted with the evils which they ought to avoid, and the perfection and happiness to which they should aspire. When they read the New Testament, they cannot doubt that God regards them ; for they will find there every comfort which they want. They will learn that the Saviour of men was sent to preach the gospel to the poor : and that he honored and sanctified a state of poverty, by appearing in the character of a poor man. Should it be granted therefore, that at present they are in a depressed situation, let not their hearts be troubled, since Jesus himself is their friend. If they obey his commands and imitate his example, they will sit with him on his throne, and everlasting joy will surround their heads.

6 This important truth leads me, in the last place, to observe, that the bliss of paradise is promised to the poor as well as the rich. The present life is so short, that the mortifications and troubles, which are endured in it, are of small moment. When we arrive at last at the haven of felicity, where all are equal, or, to speak more accurately, where there is no superiority, except what is constituted by a superiority of piety and virtue, it cannot make any difference to us, whether our station during the voyage was high or low : and we shall probably soon forget, whether we were commanders or common men. In estimating the kindness of our heavenly Benefactor, it is just that we should take into view the whole of our existence. Since the present world therefore is nothing but a point, and the world beyond the grave is infinite, there can remain no doubt in our minds that the Supreme Being is without partiality : that he is good to all men, and that his tender mercies are over all his works.

I have thus endeavored to show, that God regards the poor not less than the rich. The conclusion, which you, my brethren, who are poor, should draw from these observations, is, that it is your duty to make yourselves contented with your situation, and to be grateful to Heaven for the mercies which you have received. From pious motives you should strive to obtain the virtues and good habits, which become your stations in life, and which will render you useful to others and happy in yourselves. I would recommend to you to be respectful to your employers. Nothing is gained by rudeness and by an affected independence ; and nothing is lost by good manners. Be not envious of the rich : they have their pleasures, it is acknowledged ; but you have also

your enjoyments. If you think their condition so desirable, you are permitted to aspire after it, provided you do it by proper means; which are no other than the practice of sobriety, frugality, honesty, and industry. The chances, however, in favor of any particular person's becoming rich are so few, that you will probably not attain the point at which you aim: but if you miss of wealth, my brother, you will at least by these virtues secure the comforts of life: you will always have it in your power to clothe yourself and family in decent garments, to place a substantial dish on your table, and to kindle a cheerful fire on your hearth. I exhort you to be temperate. A great portion of the miseries of the poor proceeds from their use of ardent spirits. I want words to describe the folly of the man, who addicts himself to this vice. The selfishness, the cruelty, of his conduct exceeds its folly. He pretends to love his family; and yet, because he will not deny himself a pernicious gratification, he is continually depriving them of the necessaries of life. This is the cause why they shiver with cold, why they go in rags, and have no bread to eat. Suppose his wife should follow his example, — and she has as much right as he to indulge her appetites, — what then would become of the children who are so dear to him? They must either be thrown on the charity of the public, or they must be left to perish. Is it a small thing to destroy a beloved child? I know, my brother, that you have the heart of a man and of a father, and that you cannot hear without shuddering of the commission of so shocking a crime. I exhort you, not only to be temperate, but to be moderate in the pursuit of every enjoyment, the abuse of which may plunge you into embarrassments or ruin. Avoid those amusements,



which encroach on the time that should be devoted to labor, which are too expensive, or which lead you too far, or too often, from home. Let your pleasure be found in doing your duty, and in making them, who depend on you, happy. Then will the divine blessing rest on your lowly dwelling : and whilst the incense of grateful praise ascends each morning and evening to the throne of God, you will have reason humbly to hope, that the high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, will hear your prayers, that he will give you peace on earth, and blessedness in a future world.

5th S. after Epiph.

## SERMON XIII.

THE JOYS AND SORROWS OF MARY.

---

LUKE II. 34, 35.

SIMEON BLESSED THEM, AND SAID UNTO MARY HIS MOTHER,—YEA, A SWORD SHALL PIERCE THROUGH THY OWN SOUL ALSO.

WHEN we read the history of Jesus, we are reminded of his mother, and of the important part, which she was called to perform in the system of divine Providence. The frailty of a woman introduces death into the world ; but a woman also introduces the restorer of life : a woman yields to the temptation of the serpent ; but the seed of a woman bruises the serpent's head : if Eve therefore dishonors her sex, the disgrace is forgotten in the glory of Mary. The mother of Jesus was of so excellent a character, that her memory is entitled to affliction and respect. Whilst we sympathize with her in her joys and sorrows ; her purity, her humility, her maternal love, and her submission to the will of God, are interesting objects of contemplation.

The theme, which the text leads me to consider, is the joys and sorrows of Mary, occasioned by Jesus Christ her son. Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul

also. The word *bless* has various meanings in the sacred Scriptures ; but in this passage it intends — to wish happiness, or to pray that the favor of God would bestow on the object of the prayer peace and felicity. The petition of Simeon was answered in part : Mary was made joyful by her son. The other part of Simeon's words was not less fulfilled : A sword pierced through her soul. There are then two ideas in the text : First, Mary was blessed in her son : Secondly, her heart was pierced with sorrow by him.

I. First, Mary was blessed in her son. The honor conferred on Mary, in choosing her for the mother of Jesus, is so great, that it almost absorbs the idea of her sufferings. The heavenly messenger, who announces the glorious event, styles her the most happy of her sex : Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee : blessed art thou among women. Mary herself receives with pious gratitude the donation of heaven, and breaks forth into joyful strains, in the consciousness of the great felicity which is bestowed on her : My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my saviour : for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

The joy inspired by the annunciation of Gabriel was confirmed in the bosom of Mary by the song of the angels, who, on the night of the nativity, appeared to the shepherds. They proclaimed from heaven good tidings of great joy to all the people ; and sang this triumphant song, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men. The circumstances of the vision it appears the shepherds communicated to the mother on their visit to the divine infant ; and whilst others

were filled with wonder at their report, Mary kept all these things, and with silent rapture pondered them in her heart.

When the days of her purification were accomplished, Mary, in obedience to the injunctions of the Mosaic law, brought her child to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. On this occasion her soul was filled with astonishment and delight by the gratulations and prophecies of Simeon and Anna, who came into the temple and gave thanks to God, that their eyes had seen his salvation, and that the sun of righteousness, promised to their fathers, was now arisen on the world, to enlighten the nations.

On her return from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, her felicity was further increased by the visit of the Magi. She beheld at the feet of her babe venerable old men, who, guided by a miraculous star, came from the east, to pay homage to him as to a sovereign prince.

These are the principal circumstances of a joyful nature, related by the Evangelists of the infancy of Jesus. They must have supported and comforted the heart of Mary under the severe trials to which she was subjected. The honor of being the parent of the glorious Messiah, who was proclaimed by angels, extolled by prophets, and acknowledged as a king by the sages of the east, must have appeared to her pious and humble mind an ample compensation for her poverty and affliction, and for all the persecutions which she endured.

There were besides many endearing circumstances, which, though they are not mentioned by the Evangelists, undoubtedly existed. She was a mother: and her heart was filled with those pleasurable sensations which mothers only can describe, but which others know are

present by the tenderness, and sometimes ecstacy, which appear in their eyes. Having often seen an affectionate mother shed tears of joy, when she was looking at the sweet innocence of her babe, we can believe that the blessed Mary hung over *her* son enamoured; and that she contemplated with ineffable delight the divine lineaments of his face, the celestial radiance, which encircled his head.

There was one source of pleasure, which was almost peculiar to Mary. As Jesus was without sin, he was exempt from the usual faults of childhood. No petulance nor obstinacy was discovered in his temper. These frailties are frequently displayed at an early age; and though an affectionate mother will easily pardon them, yet as they are a cause of uneasiness to herself and bitterness to her infant, she heartily wishes that he was free from the imperfection. Whatever afflictions Mary might suffer, she received none from the moral qualities of her child. Let us call on our imaginations to paint every lovely grace which can adorn an infant, — simplicity, innocence, artlessness, soft affection, and prompt obedience, — all these amiable endowments the infant Jesus possessed in the highest degree, and they rendered him the object of the ardent love of his happy mother.

The Evangelists give a brief account of the youth of Jesus: but they inform us, that as he advanced in age, he increased in wisdom, and in favor with God and man. The greatest part of his life was passed in retirement. This was a happy period for his mother: for as his mind opened, he displayed uncommon vigor of intellect, an ardent thirst after divine knowledge, and the most gracious manners. It was manifest to his affectionate parent, that he was the object of the love of God, and

that the benignity of his character had rendered him dear to men. We are sometimes disposed to wish, that the Evangelists had seen proper to communicate to us the particulars of his early age ; but the wisdom of God has concealed these events from our eyes ; and we have nothing to assist us in our conjectures, except a knowledge of the perfection of his virtues. Two parts of his character in youth are however unfolded by St Luke ; his love of wisdom, and his filial obedience. The former was exhibited on a visit to Jerusalem, when he was twelve years of age : for his mother, after an anxious search of several days, in which he had been lost to her sight, found him at length in the temple asking questions of the learned Jews, who then taught at Jerusalem : and she witnessed with delight, that all who heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. She did not comprehend the reply, which he made to her gentle reproof, for the alarm and sorrow that he had occasioned ; but the other part of his character, his filial obedience, she could perfectly understand. With inexpressible satisfaction she beheld her son, the sublimity of whose mind her thoughts could not reach, subservient to her will, and exerting every faculty to render her happy. Sweet amidst her poverty and distress must have been the consolation of Mary derived from the affection and respect of such a child. Whilst she treasured up in her heart his words, and carefully observed his actions, the idea that he, who was so wise, and great, and good, was her own son, that he loved, and revered, and obeyed her, must have afforded a never-failing fund of joy.

The youth of Jesus passed away, and the time appointed by the Father came, when he was to enter on the duties of his public ministry. The prelude was his

baptism in Jordan, where the holy Spirit descended on him, and filled him beyond measure with divine wisdom and power. Now, from a child in subjection to his parent, he became a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. His delighted mother heard with surprise of gracious words, such as no man before had ever spoken ; of miracles, such as no prophet had ever before worked ; and of sublime virtues, such as none of the sons of Adam had ever before practised, or even conceived. Retaining no longer the right to command, she sat at his feet as his humble disciple ; and she rejoiced with others of the pious, that her eyes saw the salvation of God.

Thus blessed was Mary in her son : the honor conferred on her was great, and her felicity extreme ; but the anguish of her soul was almost without a parallel ; for her heart was pierced with sorrow by Jesus. This constitutes the second part of my discourse, to which I now turn.

II. A succession of prophecies during four thousand years had prepared mankind for the reception of the Messiah : the sublime poets of Israel had sang the glories of his kingdom in magnificent strains : the world, which was in general expectation of his appearance, was hushed into peace, that no harsh sound of war might disturb the night of his nativity : and angels were sent from heaven, to usher in the prince of light with celestial harmony. How strongly do these splendid predictions and events contrast themselves with the meanness of his birth-place ! He was born, not in Jerusalem, the city of the great king, but in Bethlehem, an obscure village of Judea ; not in the palace of his ancestors, but in a stable, because

his indigent mother could not obtain admittance into the inn. The angel Gabriel had promised her, that the Lord God would give unto her son the throne of his father David, and that his kingdom would not come to an end, like the four great monarchies. As she probably understood the words in their literal sense, how severely must her faith have been tried, and her feelings wounded, by this unpromising and gloomy commencement of his life ! What prospect was there that he could ever become a sovereign prince, when none of his countrymen would receive him, or afford him a shelter against the rigors of the midnight air ?

Not long after his birth, the life of Jesus was put in imminent danger by the persecution of Herod, who gave command to destroy all the male infants in Bethlehem and its neighborhood, hoping to involve the young child in the general massacre ; and nothing saved him from ruin, but the miraculous interposition of almighty God. The wretched mother was compelled to fly into Egypt, where she remained, banished from her country and friends, till the death of the tyrant ; and when she returned to the land of Israel, she lived in constant terror that the son of Herod would imitate the jealous cruelty of his father.

The Evangelists give us no account of any further sorrows of Mary during the infancy of Jesus : but as he was tried in all respects as other men are, we may suppose, that he was sometimes sick, and that the heart of his fond mother was sympathetically affected with his bodily pain. We may also suppose that he suffered in common with the family the inconveniences, of which poverty is the source ; and that his parent, with that disinterestedness which is more frequently seen residing



in the bosom of a mother more than any where else felt more for him than for herself. With the exception of these evils, and others of the same nature, the usual lots of humanity, we may presume that Mary passed her days, during the private life of her son, in general tranquillity and content. She saw indeed that he was not yet a king, as Gabriel had foretold; but as she was humble and pious, she probably dismissed all murmuring thoughts from her mind, resigned to the providence of God, and determined to wait with patience, till the will of heaven should be explained by events.

Her severest trials commenced, after Jesus had passed the period of youth. When he appeared before the eyes of the public, she heard with pleasure his commanding exhortations, and saw with wonder his stupendous miracles; but she perceived with pain, that he did not claim the throne of his father David, and that he even resisted all attempts to make him a king. As she was ignorant, in common with the rest of his disciples, of the true nature of his character, she did not yet comprehend that his kingdom is not of this world. She groaned with the rest of the inhabitants of Judea under the tyranny of the Romans. Loving her country, she ardently wished its deliverance from the iron yoke; she hoped that her son would vindicate its independence; but so unambitious was he of worldly honors and popular applause, that she began to fear that he would not undertake the arduous work. If he was not the king of Israel, what was he? Doubts filled her heart; her mind was perplexed with mysteries; and she could find no clue, by which she could escape from the labyrinth.

The hatred and envy of the leading men of Judea also excited her alarms. Whilst Jesus relieved the poor,

comforted the mourner, and bound up the wounds of the bruised, he reproached the Pharisees with their hypocrisy and avarice, and threatened them with the vengeance of God. Such bold invectives, she apprehended, would make him enemies. She feared, what in truth took place, that he could not long escape the effects of their jealousy and malice. She was exceedingly terrified, when she heard him declare, that he was going up to Jerusalem, where he should be betrayed into the hands of his implacable persecutors, who would inflict on him a cruel and shameful death ; for though he added, that on the third day he should rise again, yet it is evident that she understood not the meaning of his words. Were then all her hopes to be levelled with the dust ? Was he not the promised Messiah, who was to restore the kingdom of Israel ? Was she to be deprived of a beloved son, and her country of its deliverer ?

Accompanying him to Jerusalem, she soon saw him, as he had predicted, in the power of his enemies. He was betrayed by one of his chosen companions, and forsaken by all the rest. Adjudged guilty of death by the great men of the Jewish nation, he was delivered over to be punished by their masters, the Romans. She beheld him passing through the streets of Jerusalem, his temples pierced with a crown of thorns, and bearing his cross, but so exhausted with fatigue, that he was not long able to support it alone. Having arrived at the place of execution, the soldiers rudely stripped off his clothes. With anguish of soul she saw the nails forced through his hands and feet : she heard the sound of the terrible hammer : \* she beheld the blood streaming from his wounds :

\* On entendit les coups des terribles marteaux. T<sup>l</sup>émaque, II.

she looked on the deadly paleness of his countenance : her ears were smitten with his terrific cry : the spear thrust through his side, and her own soul was pierced through also. Was it then any consolation to her, that her son, still cherishing to the last his tenderness for his mother, and forgetting his own anguish amidst his anxiety for her safety, committed her to the care of the beloved John ? She was indeed to be deprived of him forever, if another protector was necessary. She heard his dying groan ; and with it all hope expired.

With pleasure I turn again to the joys of Mary. The terror and the anguish of her soul were extreme, but happily of short duration. On the third day Jesus, as he had foretold, rose triumphantly from the grave. He appeared to her and explained the nature of his kingdom ; and she now comprehended that it was not of this world. Every mystery was unfolded, and all her doubts dispelled. She understood that the Messiah was sent to redeem mankind from sin and death, to establish the dominion of righteousness, to exalt his faithful followers, not to earthly but heavenly thrones, to manifest the glory of the Supreme Being, and to proclaim peace and reconciliation between God and man. During the period of forty days, she had the happiness of seeing and conversing with her son ; and when he ascended gloriously into heaven, to sit down on the right hand of his Father, she was present with the disciples, and looked at him with exultation, till a cloud concealed him from her sight. With a heart filled with gratitude for the salvation bestowed on her and the world, she probably passed the remainder of her days in tranquillity, under the protection of the benevolent John, expecting that blessed hope,

even the manifestation of the glory of the great God, and of her Saviour Jesus Christ, once her humble and obedient son, but now her exalted sovereign and lord.

Such were the joys and sorrows of Mary. Every pious woman, every affectionate mother, must be interested in her story. Every daughter of Adam must rejoice in the glory conferred on her sex, in that a woman was chosen to be the parent of the Messiah. But mothers are frequently called to walk in the path, which Mary trod before them : as they have similar blessings, they are also afflicted in a similar manner.

1. They have similar blessings. The satisfaction of being a mother undoubtedly exceeds any other, which this earth affords. When a child is born, there is produced that exquisitely contrived animal, the glory of the creation, whose eye looks to heaven, who stands erect on the earth like a cedar of Lebanon, who is sublime in manhood, and beautiful in infancy. We are accustomed to the beauty of young children ; it makes therefore little impression on our senses, except when it is eminent in degree ; but the truth is, it is possessed by all infants, as we may be convinced by comparing them with the most beautiful of the inferior animals. For are not the round limbs of a child to be preferred to the angles in the legs of a fawn ; his smooth skin, to the fleece of a lamb, or the plumage of a dove ; and the dimples of his cheeks and elbows, his soft lips, and delicate fingers, to the bony head, hard bill, and sharp claws of the most elegant bird ? These charms, which adorn a child, are discerned by the eye of the mother, and the contemplation of them affords her ineffable delight.

In the most helpless period, even before the glimmerings of reason are perceived, an infant is lovely : but when the first dawnings of attention appear, when he can move without a support, when his lisping tongue begins to utter the first sweet articulate sounds, what new pleasure does the parent feel ! When she surveys her family of young children, bounding with agility, gay yet innocent, simple and sincere, full of ardent curiosity, and making daily rapid progress in knowledge, watching with eagerness for her smiles, and bending toward her with looks of love, how does her bosom swell with joy ! The spectacle is interesting even to strangers ; but to the eye of a mother it affords the most perfect image of paradise.

If anything can exceed this pleasure, it is the happiness of the mother, who has successfully conducted her son from infancy to youth, and whose enraptured eye now contemplates him in the bloom of life, enlightened, wise, and discreet, brave yet gentle, honorable, generous, and religious, rising with reputation in the world, and emulous to benefit his country by his talents and exertions ; yet still making his mother next to God, the first object of his attention and love, and valuing little the praises of others, if he cannot obtain her approbation. Speak, ye mothers, who have the happiness of possessing such a son, speak, for ye best can tell, what transport thrills through your heart, and with what fervor do ye return thanks to God for the inestimable gift !

2. These are the blessings which a mother enjoys : divine Providence has graciously vouchsafed to throw into her cup many sweet ingredients ; but alas ! she is frequently compelled to taste the drops of bitterness.

There are sons, who fill the breasts of their mothers with shame and sorrow. Ignorant of every branch of useful knowledge, corrupt in their principles, dead to all moral sensibility, and plunged into low and infamous vices, they pierce the hearts of their parents with unutterable pangs. But these representations belong not to my subject : I dismiss them. Children, who, are not corrupt, who are innocent, and even virtuous, inflict sufficient pain.

The feebleness and numerous maladies, to which an infant is exposed, are a source of disquiet to an affectionate mother. She consumes many wearisome days and sleepless nights in watching over the bed of sickness, endeavoring in vain to assuage pains of which the cause cannot easily be discovered, her ears all the while pierced with pitiable cries. She laments the distress of her child, and fears that he will die. When he is in health, and out of her sight, she is alarmed with apprehensions that mischief will befall him. Mischief does befall him : he is killed by a sudden blow. The limbs, just now warm with life, become cold. She hangs over his innocent form, still lovely in death, and finds that the most difficult lesson which she has to learn is resignation to the will of Heaven. Should he escape these accidents, constant care and laborious vigilance are necessary, to sow in his mind the seeds of virtue, and to pluck up the weeds of evil, which are scattered by the vicious who surround him, and against whose baneful example she cannot always guard. When he grows up to manhood, ill success sometimes attend him : for notwithstanding all the precautions of his foresight and prudence, he meets with misfortunes, which compel him to pass his days in poverty and obscurity. Her fond hopes are disappointed ; and

her son, whom she expected to stand on the pinnacle of fame and shine in the world, lies in the dust, where he is spurned under the feet of the great, and insulted by the sons of prosperity.

But these evils are of small moment in comparison with that affliction, the recollection of which my subject suggests, the death of a son, who is accomplished and virtuous. I might attempt to describe fictions of this sort ; but as I know not that I have powers to make a representation appear natural, which exists in the imagination only, I shall speak of a real event that I have known.

I was once acquainted with a woman, whose amiable manners had rendered her in youth the object of universal admiration, and who in mature age was esteemed by all who knew her, for her good sense, discretion and virtue. After the birth of several children she was deprived of her husband, and at the same time of all the means of support. A benevolent friend gave her a half-acre of ground, and a few kind neighbors, who pitied her distress, assisted her in building a cottage, where, by unremitted industry and extreme economy, she provided bread for her young family. Her house was the abode of neatness, harmony, and devotion : she gave thanks to God every morning and evening for raising up in her favor so many protectors and benefactors, and for blessing her and her offspring with so much peace and content. Among her children, all of whom were distinguished in the vicinity for their diligence, good behaviour, and love of their mother, she had one son, who was her darling. Though she endeavored to conceal it, yet he was worthy of all her partiality ; for he was a youth of noble principles, and a warm and faithful heart. Happy was he,



when he attained an age, in which he was enabled in some measure to repay the attentions of his parent. He shipped himself as a seaman, made one successful voyage, returned home, and with an air of grateful exultation threw his little earnings into the lap of his mother. He again embarked, and several months passed away. — I was present, when a messenger came in, and told a short and dismal story : In one of the evolutions of the vessel, the boom struck his head and put an immediate period to his existence. This event happened many years ago, when I was quite young ; but I never can forget the speechless agony and the dryness of her eye. Accustomed to see women weep over their afflictions, I thought it strange, that the death of such a son did not force from her a single tear.

Other catastrophes of the same kind, and of a more recent date, might be narrated ; but I forbear ; for I fear the recital of them would come too near the bosoms of some of my hearers. I would not renew their grief ; I would rather attempt to console them. I would with affectionate sympathy address you, who are afflicted mothers and say : You have lost a son, who was amiable and wise ; but would you, if you could, annihilate all remembrance of a child, who was everything, which your heart could desire ? You know you would not ; for amidst your tears the memory of his virtues is the source of delight. Your son is dead, but not lost forever. The gospel illuminates your mind with the rays of hope ; for Jesus, whose sufferings and death pierced the soul of Mary with anguish, is the resurrection and the life. He will restore the righteous son to the fond embrace of his pious mother. There is a world where all tears will be wiped away from your eyes, and where there will no



longer be any disappointed expectations, or any separation of friends.

If the love of a mother surpasses all other love, you, who are a son, ought with the full measure of gratitude to return her affection. You are bound to her by the strongest ties: treat her with never failing tenderness. She will love you, whatever may be your character; but let her have cause to glory in her child. Disappoint not her hope: do not by your vices plunge a sword into her bosom: do not break her heart: do not compel her to wish that God would hide her in the grave. Look unto Jesus the pattern of every excellence. Love your mother as he loved his mother: obey, honor, cherish, and protect her, as he obeyed his earthly parent. Finally, imprint on your mind the words of the wise man: He that is obedient unto the Lord, will be a comfort to his mother. Remember that thou wast born of her, and how canst thou recompense her the things that she hath done for thee? Forget not then the sorrows of thy mother.

Purification of Mary.

## SERMON XIV.

CANDOR.

---

1 COR. XIII. 5, 7.

CHARITY THINKETH NO EVIL,— BELIEVETH ALL THINGS,  
HOPETH ALL THINGS.

THE proper meaning of the word charity, in the praise of which St Paul is so eloquent in this chapter, is universal love. This comprehensive virtue is divided into two branches, piety and benevolence. The first respects God ; the second, our neighbor. Benevolence, which intends the same thing as good will to mankind, is subdivided into several virtues ; one of the most important of which is candor. Candor is the subject of the present discourse.

Candor is that disposition of mind, which forbids us to think evil of our fellow men, and which leads us to form a favorable opinion of their persons, knowledge, sentiments and actions. It is peculiarly a virtue, which it is easier to recommend than to practise. Prejudices force themselves into the mind by so many avenues, that no modest man would choose to say of himself, I am candid. From many vices men may refrain ; but who can preserve himself from the want of candor ? If few

persons can do it, who has a right to enjoin the virtue? These questions would prevent me from proceeding further in the subject, if they could not be answered by other questions: Can any one celebrate candor, without perceiving in himself a growing inclination to become her follower? As she possesses so many amiable qualities, who can even think of her, without loving her? who can behold her features, without discovering new charms, and new motives for admiring her? In recommending candor therefore, I would hope to improve my own heart as well as yours.

We may exhibit, or be deficient in candor, in thinking or speaking, I. of the external qualities, II. of the knowledge and mental endowments, III. of the sentiments, and, IV. of the actions of our fellow men.

I. What is external is in a great measure, if not altogether, independent of men. They ought not therefore, it may be said, to be painfully affected by any opinion which is formed of what their own agency was not concerned in producing. This may be true; men however cannot forbear considering their external qualities as parts of themselves. An unfavorable judgment, pronounced on these qualities, is thought to be an injury scarcely inferior to an imputation of vice. We may be candid or uncandid in the opinion, which we entertain of what is merely outward; and it is evident that whilst the former is a happy disposition of mind, the latter is a disposition which ought to be avoided. A frequent cause of deficiency in this branch of candor is an ambition of the character of acute discernment. Every eye, it is supposed, is capable of discovering what is beautiful; but a

superior judgment is requisite to find out defects. We would charitably hope that the prejudiced opinions, which are formed of external qualities, do not generally proceed from an envious heart. This part of the subject perhaps may not be esteemed of much importance. But whatever tends to improve the temper, and of consequence to lessen the evils of life, is certainly important. That candor, which is exercised on what is merely external, will extend itself to other things; for it is the same virtue under different modifications and appearances. A disposition which is inclined to think favorably of the persons, manners, and external accomplishments of men, will also candidly judge of their knowledge, sentiments, and actions. I would therefore recommend to you to seek for beauty in every object which you behold, and to overlook deformities. This direction of your sight will not only heighten your virtue, but it will also add to your happiness. An eye, which is willing to be gratified, finds delight superior to the pleasure which the affection of discernment affords; for, by the established constitution of nature, beauty always gives pleasure, whilst what is opposite to it gives pain. Thus even by this lower degree of candor you may multiply and increase causes of satisfaction. Upon this theme however I would not dwell, but proceed to consider the second kind of objects on which we may exercise candor.

II. These objects, as I have observed, are mental endowments and knowledge. There are various causes, which lead us to think unfavorably of the abilities of each other.

I. The most obvious is envy. When the knowledge of another man obscures our own, gives him a pre-emi-

nence above us, or is in any way inconsistent with our interest, we are inclined to depreciate it, not only by speaking against it, but even by thinking of it unworthily. For we have such a command over our minds, that what we passionately wish to be true, we in time come to believe. There are however other causes less hateful than envy, from which the want of candor proceeds.

2. As our knowledge is of different kinds, we are disposed to think uncandidly of the acquisitions of other men. We know the value of the knowledge which is in our own mind, we can perceive its uses, we remember the pains which it cost us to obtain it; but none of these things can we see without us. We suppose that what is performed easily by another is not in itself difficult, though that ease may be the effect of previous labor. We are apt therefore to undervalue what we imagine can be done with so little effort; and we are apt to judge uncandidly, if it is not done in the best manner possible. As our own knowledge is thus conceived to be the most difficult, so it is also imagined to be of the greatest importance. We too often judge that the acquisitions of other men are useless, and their exertions to obtain them unprofitable. Of what benefit, we inquire, can such things be to them or to the world? The critic, who spends his time in the study of words, regards the discoveries of the astronomer as of small value. Of what use, says he, is it to determine whether the sun is greater or less than the earth; or whether a planet has four moons or five? The astronomer, on the other hand, thinks the labors of the critic equally unprofitable, and that it is the idlest thing imaginable to employ months and years in ascertaining the genuine readings of an ancient author. The mathematician is a dull, laborious

slave in the eyes of the poet, whilst the poet appears to the mathematician a rhyming trifle. — These several studies are however of benefit to the world ; and the partial ideas, which we entertain respecting them, are forbidden by christian charity ; for they render us vain, prejudiced, and uncandid.

3. Another cause which leads men to betray a want of candor in judging of the knowledge of their neighbors is this, that their taste is superior to their abilities. It is difficult to attain perfection in any art or science, but it is comparatively easy to form an idea of it in our minds. We can know when an aspirant falls short of this perfection, though we ourselves cannot rise as high ; we can perceive his defects, though we are unable to mend them. In consequence of this cause how few are allowed to be eminent in their profession ! upon how few are we willing to bestow that applause which is due to their abilities ! Even when a man of splendid genius and the most enlarged attainments exhibits proofs of his knowledge and talents, we are ready to say, He does well ; but certainly he ought to do better. Such an error ought to be avoided : such a branch of science is absolutely necessary, and ought to be possessed by him : of this point he is partially informed ; and of that point he is totally ignorant.

4. These and sentiments of the like kind are instances of a want of candor. In judging in this manner, we are governed by prejudice, and do not make proper allowance for the dead weight, which soon brings to the ground even the wings of an eagle. Permit me then to recommend to you to exercise candor, when ye think or speak of the knowledge and talents of your fellow men. Avoid, above all things, every species of envy. It is a

base passion which ought not to inhabit the breast of a Christian. The abilities of another man are not mean, merely because they stand in your way ; they are not inferior to yours, merely because you wish them to be so. Study also to obtain an acquaintance with human nature and with yourselves. A man who has a just idea of his own abilities, will not be uncandid. For though he will perceive that he knows a few things, yet he will also be sensible that he is ignorant in many things. Reflecting on the pains that he has taken, to obtain the science of which he is possessed, he will be willing to acknowledge, that others may have exerted equal labor. As the knowledge with which he is endowed appears to him of great importance, he will be ready to confess, that their knowledge may appear to them important ; and that it may in fact be full as important. In fine, as he must be conscious of many defects in his own attainments, he will judge with candor of that want of perfection, which he observes in them.

5. A just idea of human nature destroys your prejudices and renders you candid. For look at men ; and do you find many very foolish, or many very wise ? What is called *common sense*, deserves the title which is given to it ; for it is in fact common. Few men are totally ignorant, and few men have much knowledge. The acquisitions of men are of different kinds ; but their real value may be the same, as they may contribute equally to the benefit of society. Some persons are showy in their knowledge ; they have acquired the art of joining words aptly together ; but this art does not give them a right to judge unfavorably of the knowledge of others. For a man of splendid talents, an eloquent man, may not after all be acquainted with more truths, than an hum-

ble and reserved man, who lives and dies in obscurity. These considerations should teach us candor; and they should deter us from imputing ignorance and folly to any one, who is not possessed of exactly the same kind of knowledge as ourselves. We are too ready to do this without sufficient grounds; but because a person speaks absurdly on a subject, with which he is not acquainted, it does not follow that he is not well informed in other subjects.

6. But what contributes more than anything to render us candid in our opinions of the abilities of our fellow men, is an enlightened and improved understanding. They, who have only sipped at the fountain of science, are the least disposed to be pleased, the most inclined to be critical and severe, the most ready to find fault, and the most acute in discovering defects. A man of enlarged knowledge is acquainted with the difficulties, which obstruct the path of science. He is sensible, that though he has frequently attempted to excel, yet that he has seldom, perhaps never, been able to attain the end proposed. Convinced that every human mind is limited, and that the best instructed persons soon disclose all that they know, he views with candid eyes those blanks of ignorance, which occupy such large spaces in the souls of other men. A man of extensive abilities also knows how difficult it sometimes is to distinguish wisdom from folly, what is genuine from what is spurious. As he cannot always determine whether his own tongue is uttering good sense or not, he will candidly pardon the speaker whom he hears, and the friend with whom he converses, if he sometimes discovers that they are not wiser than himself.



III. We are inclined then to think and speak uncandidly of the external qualities, and of the mental accomplishments of our fellow men ; but we are still more disposed to judge uncandidly of their sentiments, in particular of their religious sentiments. In this case it is difficult to avoid a considerable degree of prejudice, and impossible perhaps to avoid it altogether. Such is the imperfection of the human mind, and so much exposed is it to be clouded with ignorance, error, and false ideas, that a man of complete candor in religion is a character not less rare than estimable. We would wish to correct these faults in ourselves and others ; but we cannot expect fully to accomplish the desirable end. A degree of bigotry will still adhere to us, notwithstanding all our exertions to free ourselves from it. There are considerations however, which may in some measure check, though they will not entirely remove, the evil. To these considerations let us attend.

I. I would first observe, that candor and its opposite are not confined to any particular sect. There are men in all parties who are deficient in this virtue ; and it is not easy to determine what sect abounds most with them. We should, previous to a knowledge of the fact, suppose that they, whose sentiments are the most simple and rational, would be the most candid ; but experience will convince us that this is a doubtful point. There are men, whose minds, in our opinion, are enlightened with the blaze of truth, and who nevertheless are bitter and uncharitable. By candor therefore must not be understood the belief of any particular tenets. The word may be used in this sense ; but it has a different meaning. Candor ought not to be confounded with free inquiry ; for every man who inquires with freedom is not candid. The seat of candor is the heart, and not the

head ; and the head may be improved, whilst the heart still remains under the dominion of prejudice.

3. This observation is adapted in some measure to remove our uncandid prejudices : and there are other considerations, which, if attended to, will produce the same beneficial consequences. When we reflect on the manner, in which men in general have obtained possession of the opinions, for which we are disposed to condemn them, we ought not to be surprised that they are tenacious of them, though they are frequently erroneous. The majority of mankind acquire their sentiments from education. Of consequence the majority of mankind have always believed some doctrines which are not true. For as men have ever differed from each other, in those points on which they differ, if one party is right, all the rest must be wrong. If, for example, the Calvinist believes the truth, the Arminian, in the doctrines in which he opposes him, cannot believe it : if the episcopal mode of church government is the best, the presbyterian cannot be the best. As truth and error therefore really exist, it appears to us as probable that the opinions, in which we have been educated, should be true as any others. But whether they are true or not, the fondness, which we always feel for the ideas impressed on our minds in early life, gives us a prepossession in favor of the sentiments, which we have received from education. Thus the majority of mankind always believe some doctrines which are erroneous. What then ? Is this any reason why we should not exercise candor toward them ? For do these errors affect their hearts ? They probably do not. The Father of mercies beholds them with pity ; and why should we regard them with spleen ? He has said, that in every nation he who feareth him and work-

eth righteousness, is accepted of him : and what right have we to say the contrary ? If that Being, to whom only his creatures are responsible for their errors, freely pardons them, we who are not injured by them, ought to imitate his example. Truth, it is confessed, is an invaluable treasure : it makes a man free, it makes him happy : but if the believers in the truth are the only good characters, what then will become of the rest of mankind ?

3. Some men, rejecting the principles of their education, acquire their sentiments from books. They have a right so to do ; but they run great hazards of missing the truth ; for of the books, which have been written on doctrinal subjects, a large proportion are filled with errors. If they should read none except these erroneous books, their opinions would be as much corrupted by them, as they could be by education. After all, should they by reading arrive at the knowledge of the truth, such knowledge would principally be the effect, not of choice, but of accident. For it depends chiefly upon accident what books are put into their hands by their instructors, what are recommended to them by their friends, what they read merely because they are new, and what they peruse because they are written in a style which pleases them. Should they determine to read everything, and judge for themselves, they may still miss the truth ; for the variety of contradictory doctrines, which they meet with, may so perplex their minds, that they may be unable to discover what is genuine ; and the consequence may be, a resolution to believe nothing, from the fear of believing falsehoods. These observations should induce men of letters to be candid to the unlearned : for though it is much more rational and meritorious to read and ex-

amine for ourselves, than to adhere without examination to the opinions of our childhood ; yet such inquiry will not infallibly be crowned with success. As the studious man therefore may possibly be in an error, as well as the man of no inquiry, it ill becomes the former uncharitably to condemn the latter. Neither the one party nor the other ought to be uncandid toward each other ; for the person, who has never examined a subject, cannot pretend that there is any crime in examination. He may suppose that many books are too heretical to be read ; but until he can obtain the vote of all mankind and determine what heresy is, he has no right to fix that character on any particular opinions, or on any particular author.

4. There are others, who have acquired their sentiments from themselves, without being indebted either to education or to books. They who adopt this plan, think it the best of any ; for they say, if an inquirer takes common sense for his guide, it is most probable that the most important truths will discover themselves to him. But neither is this method infallible, because a fondness for finding out something new may lead a person to embrace absurd opinions. Most of the possibilities and relations of ideas have been long since exhausted : for which reason what is absolutely new is generally false ; but of such new opinions men are apt to be tenacious. It has cost them great pains, to invent them : they are the works of their own hands, their own children ; and they have for them the same partiality, which all parents feel for their offspring. Persons of this character ought peculiarly to cultivate candor : they ought not to be positive, and uncharitably to censure others for not embracing opinions, in the belief of which

perhaps they stand alone. The opposite parties ought also to be candid : For has not an inquirer a right to draw his opinions from himself, when he finds the sentiments of others are in general so contradictory and absurd ? These persons ought to consider, that the man whom they condemn, if he is erroneous, may not be intentionally in an error. He may have exerted his faculties with honesty and impartiality ; and though he has not obtained the truth, yet it is a mere misfortune, and no crime.

5. In a word, in whatever view we regard the opinions of men, we find every reason for exercising candor. We are too apt to be shocked with sentiments, which differ from our own ; but this ought not so to be ; for the speculative sentiments of men have scarcely more influence on their morals, than the color of their faces, or even the clothes which they wear. Whilst honesty, benevolence and piety are to be found in all sects and parties, we ought candidly to confess that no class of opinions whatever are peculiarly adapted to make men vicious. We are disposed to think those doctrines dangerous, to which we have not been accustomed, and with which we are little acquainted ; but this is a prejudice which we ought carefully to remove : for what appears thus new to us, and too pernicious ever to be maintained, may be nothing more than the revival of a doctrine, which existed in a former period of time, or perhaps the revival of truth itself. On the other hand, they, who dissent from the multitude, are prone to charge them with weakness, absurdity, and superstition ; but these censures are unworthy of a philosopher, a man of candor, a Christian ; for though the sentiments, which are established are not, for that reason, true, yet they are not, for that reason, false.

6. These observations chiefly respect doctrines which are unessential ; and most doctrines about which men differ, are of this kind : for Christians generally agree in important points. This remark furnishes another and a cogent reason, why we should be candid ; for surely it is not less absurd, than it is destructive of peace, uncharitably to censure men for maintaining doctrines, when it is not of much consequence, whether they believe or disbelieve them. Practice is everything ; and the necessity of practice all men acknowledge. Every Christian confesses that piety to God and good will to mankind are the first of obligations, and that holiness is indispensably requisite to make us happy here and hereafter. Christians, it is true, express themselves variously on these subjects ; but from the imperfection of the human understanding and the still greater imperfection of language, such variations are unavoidable. What rational man, what man of benevolence, will banish candor from his bosom, merely on account of a difference of expressions ?

7. When Christians learn to think candidly of their brethren, who embrace opposite sentiments, they have made great progress in this amiable virtue ; but in order to be complete in candor, it is necessary to proceed one step further. As many persons, particularly they, whose tempers are warm, imagine their own opinions to be, not only evident in themselves, but of the utmost importance : so they likewise suppose that the opinions of others are pernicious as well as erroneous. Hence prejudice and bigotry enter the mind ; and they are led to pronounce their sentences of condemnation, more perhaps from the love of what they conceive to be truth, than from a want of benevolence. A Christian of a liberal and enlarged

mind will candidly judge of persons, who are thus deficient in candor. When we hear one man railing against heretics and schismatics, and another against the superstitious and enthusiastic, we ought not at once to conclude that they are not, on the whole, pious and virtuous Christians. Human nature is so mixed a thing, it is in general so blended with good and evil, that bigots sometimes possess estimable qualities. They whose minds are filled with inveterate prejudices, may be sincere : and though they violate one of the most essential laws of the gospel, the law of charity, yet they may think all the while that they are doing God service. Experience may convince us that some of the warmest zealots are men of humanity, where religious sentiments are out of the question ; and whilst they anathematize the wretch, whose opinions are not exactly the same as their own, they may at the same time pity him and lament his fate, and cheerfully relieve him from temporal distress. These considerations should lead us to be candid to the prejudiced, to be candid to the bigoted, to be candid to the uncandid, to be candid to them, even when they condemn us as erroneous and the enemies of the true religion.

IV. We think uncandidly then of the external qualities, of the knowledge, and of the sentiments of our fellow men ; finally, we are also disposed to judge uncandidly of their actions. Of actions, it must be confessed, we can more easily judge than of other objects ; and of actions we have a better right to judge. The knowledge and sentiments of men cannot so readily be known to us. Their sentiments are easily concealed ; and even with respect to their knowledge, reserve and silence



may throw so much obscurity over it, that we cannot always determine, whether a man is foolish or wise. But the actions of men are more open to us: they are continually producing to view the effects of the causes, which exist in their bosoms; and these effects must partake either of the nature of vice or virtue. Of actions then we can judge, because we can see them: Of actions, as I have said, we have, in some measure, a right to judge, because merit and demerit belong only to them. That we know men by their fruits, that their moral character depends on the quality of their deeds, is a truth which is generally acknowledged.

Men, presuming on this truth, suppose that they may lawfully censure the actions of their neighbors, when they appear to be vicious. It is even their duty, they think, not only to approve virtue, but to condemn vice, and to hold it up to the scorn and detestation which it deserves. That it is their duty to a certain extent, must be admitted; there is room however for candor, when we judge or speak of the actions of mankind.

1. For, first, though we have a right to condemn vice, where it appears, yet we have no right to presume that it exists, where it does not appear. This presumption however is common; and harsh censures are the consequences of such rash conclusions. How ready are we to attribute actions which seem to be good to bad motives! Is a man liberal in his donations? We ascribe it to any cause rather than to generosity. He is ostentatious, we say. Or, He is endeavoring to make interest, in order to promote some sinister design. On the other hand, is a man economical? His motive may be a desire to set a good example amidst an age of extravagance; or perhaps the principle of honesty itself; for he may



be in debt, and may think that he has no right to be profuse with the property of his creditors. But we are willing to imagine that he is parsimonious. There is scarcely one good action that a man of virtue can perform, which a person who is destitute of candor is not capable of attributing to a bad motive. In his eyes the humble man is base; the condescending, mean; the modest, precise; the man of dignity, proud; the pious, a hypocrite. Such judgments embitter our tempers, and whilst they render us severe, they make us unhappy. True it is, that they who seem to be virtuous, are sometimes vicious; and true it is, that actions which appear to be good, sometimes proceed from bad motives: But because such things may be, why should we always suppose that they exist? Or because there is a mixture of imperfection in all human actions, why should we at once pronounce, that nothing but imperfection prevails? The modest man may be in some degree vain; the generous may be altogether without selfishness; even the man of real piety may be too solemn. But ought we to form our opinion of such characters from their few defects, or from their many virtues? As no man is wise at all hours, so no man is always virtuous: but we ought to denominate him wise and virtuous, who is wise and virtuous on the whole.

2. We may discover a want of candor, not only in attributing good actions to a bad motive, but also in attributing bad actions to the worst motive. It is an observation, which is justified by experience, that no man loves vice for its own sake. The heart, before it is debauched by the practice of immorality, prefers good to evil. No person therefore sins in the first instance, because he loves sin itself; but the cause of his sinning is

this, that there are planted in his breast a strong desire of happiness, and aversion from pain. The former he cannot forbear pursuing; the latter he cannot forbear avoiding. When he deviates from virtue, he is urged on by the hope of obtaining some pleasure, or of delivering himself from something disagreeable. If he believed that he could effect his purpose as well by laudable as by culpable means, he would undoubtedly prefer the former to the latter. For I appeal to the experience of all, who have ever yielded to temptation, whether they would not, in every instance, rather have followed the bliss, which appeared before them, by the path of virtue, than by the path of vice? I am far from intending by these observations to justify sin: No, it is always hateful and pernicious: However it may flatter for a time, it cannot in the end afford genuine happiness; and no man is irresistibly impelled to commit it; for there are in every person's bosom sufficient motives to induce him to avoid it: — I would not justify sin: I design only to make you candid toward sinners. For it is evident, if what I have remarked is true, that instead of ascribing the actions of bad men to the worst motive, we ought to ascribe them to a motive bad indeed, but as far removed as possible from the worst. They who have studied human nature confess, that there is little unmixed malice in the world. Men much more frequently transgress from levity, vanity, caprice, passion, and other principles of a less atrocious kind, than from hatred or revenge.

3. We are also deficient in candor, when we judge a man to be habitually vicious, because he has committed one bad action. The opinions, which we form of each other in these cases, are unkind. If the honest man

commits one dishonest action ; if the generous is in one instance mean : if the pious utters one profane word ; if the temperate is once overtaken by drunkenness ; we have no mercy ; we resign the character without compassion to infamy. The unhappy person may have bitterly repented of his crime ; he may have made his peace with Heaven : but *we* cannot pardon, *we* refuse to acknowledge that his mind can be pure, because it has once been defiled. This judgment is uncandid ; for the character of a man ought to be determined, not from what he was, but from what he is now. Unless we deny the possibility of reformation, we ought to forget the sins, which men neither have repeated nor desire to repeat ; unless we wish to drive the repentant sinner to despair, we ought to spare the tongue of censure, when he shows by the change of his conduct, that he is sorry for his offence.

4. We also discover a want of candor, when we do not make proper allowance for the frailties of human nature. The Psalmist says, that God knoweth our frame, that he remembereth we are but dust. In judging of the actions of each other, we also ought to remember and consider what men are. They are not irrational animals ; but they are far below angels. They are composed of bodies as well as minds ; and the corporeal part bears a large proportion to the mental. By such a class of creatures great and virtuous actions may be performed ; but we must expect to find many instances of imperfection. Even angels, if they considered human nature justly, would not condemn it with severity ; but we men, who partake of the same frailties, who are exposed to the same weaknesses and faults, ought to be indulgent to each other. — From the frailty of human

nature proceeds that inconsistency of conduct, which may be observed in the best of men. Hence it is, that the prudent are sometimes rash ; that the liberal sometimes turn a deaf ear to the poor ; that the moderate are sometimes impetuous ; that the meek and gentle are sometimes proud and angry. Who can always command his temper, when provoked by scorn ? Who can always maintain a resigned frame of mind, when misfortunes press so thickly upon him, that it is impossible to escape them, when sickness consumes, when poverty threatens him, and when both his body and soul are so debilitated, that they are no longer capable of sustaining his infirmity ? If in such cases men become peevish, if they are led to speak unadvisably with their lips, let us not conclude, that they are totally destitute of fortitude and equanimity. We ought also to make candid allowances for the frailties, which are peculiar to certain ages of life, as well as for the general imperfection of human nature. In infancy we must expect to find thoughtlessness and levity ; in youth we must look for passion, a fondness for pleasure, and an aversion from restraint ; in manhood we must expect distrust, ambition, and an excess of prudence. But if the infant is simple and docile ; if the youth is honorable, generous, brave, and sincere ; if the man is moderate, indulgent, and affectionate ; we ought to forgive their unavoidable imperfections. If candor was adhered to, youth would pardon the gravity of age ; and age, the vivacity of youth. — It is from the imperfection of human nature, that men find it so difficult to preserve a due medium in their actions. Such is the force of habit, and so apt is it to become rooted in the character, when it has obtained possession of it, that it is almost impossible to keep ourselves from

extremes. As the perfection of virtue however consists in moderation, or in balancing and qualifying one action by another, it is evident that few men can attain this perfection. This consideration should induce us to judge candidly of each other. One man supposes that frankness and sincerity are the first of virtues, that every good man ought to carry his heart in his hand, that it is his duty to be cheerful, that a solemnity of face is generally a cheat, and that hypocrisy is the last of crimes. How prone will this person be to be too open, too undisguised, too cheerful! But should we not betray a want of candor, if we severely censured him merely for the excess of what is amiable and praiseworthy? Another person considers seriousness as the best of all habits. The business which his Maker has committed to him to transact appears of such moment, that it ought to preclude all levity and mirth. He carefully avoids every idle word, and endeavors to fix his whole attention on heavenly objects. Such a person will be apt to become too grave and gloomy; but let us not on that account uncandidly condemn so good a man. In like manner, the man of dignity, who imagines that the most effectual preservative against the meanness of vice is self-reverence, will be exposed to have his character debased by a small degree of pride. On the other hand, the man of a condescending, humble, and gentle disposition is in danger of becoming too easy and compliant. His character may in general be innocent; but he may sometimes yield to temptation, from diffidence, and from an obliging temper. In both these cases we ought charitably to forgive the excesses, which proceed from such laudable principles; and if we cannot quite forgive the condescending and diffident man, we ought at least to reprove him with tenderness.

5. We ought also, when we judge of human actions, to make candid allowance for the unavoidable defects of moral and religious education. One man is born amidst the happiest advantages. His parents are pious and virtuous. In infancy he is taught to know and fear God, to obey his laws, to rely on his protection. He early receives a taste for devotion. The best examples are continually placed before his eyes; and he is instructed by them, as well as by precept, that the practice of honesty, purity and humanity, constitutes the felicity of man. His situation in life is that which is most favorable to virtue. Equally removed from the extremes of poverty and wealth, he finds no temptations to commit the vices which are peculiar to either station. Success crowns his exertions; and though he sometimes is deprived of a friend, and meets with other calamities, yet all his afflictions are of that kind, which are adapted to refine and soften the heart. From such a person we have a right to expect high degrees of virtue. If he falls into vice, if he becomes intemperate, dishonest, selfish, or profane, we may lawfully censure him. — But there is another person whom we ought to view with more indulgence. He is born under every possible disadvantage. His parents are of the most vile and abandoned characters, intemperate, dishonest, contentious, malicious, obscene, profane. Their ignorance prevents them from knowing the advantages of an education. He enters the world unacquainted with everything, except the practice of vice. In the world he combats with poverty and wretchedness. As he never was instructed in a manual art, he is incapable of procuring a subsistence in any other way, than common labor; and from this he has a strong aversion, as no pains have been taken to communicate to

him the habits of industry. He is compelled to associate with the lowest and worst company, as he has no means and qualifications of rising to any other. The effect of all these causes is, that he is a pernicious member of society, idle, intemperate, profane, dishonest. He runs a short career of iniquity, and perhaps at last is taken away by an untimely death. The character whom I have now described is certainly very wicked, as well as very wretched. But how many reasons have we for exercising candor, when we judge of him! and with what compassion ought we to behold him! For he is an immortal being, corrupted by bad example and ruined by the want of education. He has sinned, not so much from deliberation, as from frenzy: through life his mind has been agitated, intoxicated, maddened; and though that divine spark, whence proceeds all virtue, has not been totally extinguished, — for who can extinguish it? — yet it has been so effectually smothered, as to be incapable, in this state of trial, of emitting any light. To condemn with un pitying severity this character, because he is not as virtuous as the person first described, is like requiring that thorns should produce grapes, and thistles, figs.

On the whole, in whatever view we regard the actions of men, we perceive many motives for exercising candor. They, who have experienced few of the difficulties which attend a virtuous course, who being far removed out of the reach of the strongest temptations, are unacquainted with their force, may be disposed to be uncandid; they may severely censure the slightest deviations; but when they consider what human nature is, when they reflect on their own frailty, the frequent faults



which, notwithstanding all their advantages, they have committed, they will learn to be more candid. There are Christians, who are disposed to overlook their own imperfections, whilst they treat the imperfections of others without mercy. They seem to think that they shall by these means compound for their peculiar vices, or at least ward off the censures of the world. To such persons I would recommend the study of their own characters. Let them endeavor to become acquainted with their own hearts, and to reform what is amiss in their own conduct. Self-examination will afford them sufficient employment, and leave them no time to censure the conduct of their brethren. This advice is conformable to the precepts of our blessed Saviour. Let him, said he in a memorable instance, let him who is without sin, cast the first stone. Again, Why beholdest thou the mote which is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam which is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote which is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam which is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then thou shalt see clearly to pull out the mote which is in thy brother's eye. The man, who has repented of his own vices, will view his brethren, who are still under the dominion of sin, with compassion and affection, not with severity or ill will. He will desire, he will endeavor to reform them, as he knows by experience that the paths of wickedness lead to misery and destruction; but the means, which he employs to effect this benevolent purpose will be kind words, and charitable exhortations.



I have thus endeavored to recommend candor ; and I would now conclude my discourse with entreating you to become acquainted with this amiable virtue. Cherish her as your companion ; embrace her as your friend. Her presence will diffuse peace through your minds, and calm the tumults, which severity and censoriousness excite in her absence. Forget not however to associate her with every other virtue ; for the virtues appear to the best advantage in each other's society, and are in general inseparable companions ; when one is banished, the rest will be inclined to depart. I exhort you therefore in the words of the Apostle Peter : Add to your faith, fortitude ; and to fortitude, knowledge ; and to knowledge, temperance ; and to temperance, patience ; and to patience, godliness ; and to godliness, brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**S.** before Lent.

## SERMON XV.

THE ENTICEMENT OF SINNERS.

---

PROV. I. 10.

MY SON, IF SINNERS ENTICE THEE, CONSENT THOU NOT.

WHAT is the cause of sin? is a question on which speculative men have been much divided. Many solutions have been attempted; but none has been given, which has satisfied all parties. Some have attributed it to the abuse of principles, which are in themselves good and useful; others, to a nature originally corrupt; a third party, to the temptation of the Devil: and a fourth, to the influence of the Supreme Being himself, who hates the sin, which he has created. But whatever the cause of it may be, the fact is certain that it exists in the world, and that it is both destructive of our happiness, and displeasing to God. To extenuate the guilt of it, we may lay the blame of it upon nature; but our consciences testify that this excuse is not satisfactory. When we commit it, we feel that we do wrong; we feel that we could have done otherwise; and we are convinced, that we are chargeable with guilt, and that we may be justly punished. It is our duty therefore, instead of endeavoring to justify it by arguments which, though they may be specious in theory, are yet practically false, and dan-

gerous to act upon ; it is our duty to guard ourselves against it with the utmost caution, and to avoid, in particular, the temptations which may lead us to evil. One of the strongest of these temptations is the bad example of the wicked. Whilst there are around us depraved men, who are continually enticing us, our situation is extremely perilous. We need look no further than to them for the cause of sin. There may be other causes ; but the pernicious example of a corrupt multitude from whatever source it originated, is alone sufficient to keep the world corrupt, and to make it degenerate still more and more.

Solomon, who in his system of morals has shown us what constitutes the business, the dignity, and happiness of human nature, has, in the introduction of his Proverbs, given us a caution against yielding to the temptations of the wicked : My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. He knew that virtue is rendered difficult by the degeneracy of mankind, and that the most dangerous foes to the practice of it are examples of iniquity. It was necessary therefore to warn the young of what they might expect. It was necessary to warn them, that they would not be suffered to remain unmolested in the paths of innocence ; and that the first preparative of a holy life was a fear of being overcome by temptation.

We have in our constitution, passions and appetites, which are given to us for wise purposes ; but which, when they are abused, are the sources of guilt and wretchedness. These passions would seldom be perverted from their right ends, if we were not influenced by the evil example of others. If we saw no persons around us sin, we should not think of sinning. Our passions

would be always gentle breezes, if they were not excited by the breath of the licentious. Who would inflame his spirits with wine, if there were no sinners to entice him to mad revelry? Who would violate truth, if by doing it, he became a solitary liar? Who would dare to be a knave, if dishonesty was unknown in the world? Where is the man to be found, who would venture, however strong his passions might be, to commit the first crime; to make the first breach in the laws of God; to be the first to introduce confusion into the constitution of nature? Without temptations from surrounding sinners, temptations within would hardly be sufficient to force men into vice.

This observation shows that our principal care ought to be to guard ourselves against the enticings of the wicked, and the contagion of evil example. In running the career of virtue, the laws of God and our consciences direct us to the right path. It is the irregular conduct of others, which chiefly draws us aside. We follow whither the degenerate lead; for if there were no degenerate to lead, we should venture alone into the crooked paths of vice, into the wilderness of guilt. Alone we should brave all the dangers of the place. Society prevents us from seeing the horrors of the dismal region. We wander to destruction, because we are allured on by companions; for without companions we should hardly dare to stray.

But the opinions and practices of the wicked, however numerous, cannot alter the nature of vice. Its hatefulness does not lessen, in proportion as it becomes prevalent. In every circumstance and situation, it is a violation of the laws of God, and destructive both of present and future happiness. A man is not less guilty, because

he has associates in guilt ; and he will not be less miserable, because he will have many companions in misery.

Consider these truths, my brethren, and let them be the guides of your moral and religious conduct. Imitate not the vices of a degenerate age. When sinners entice thee, consent thou not ; consent not with thy actions ; consent not even with thy will. Enter not into the path of the wicked ; and go not into the way of evil men. Avoid it ; pass not by it ; turn from it, and pass away. For the way of the wicked is as darkness : they know not at what they stumble. They discern not the rocks and chasms, which obstruct their steps ; for their eyes are blinded, and a horrible gloominess overwhelms them.

1. If the temptation which allures you is the hope of enriching yourself by plunder, yield not to its solicitation. If you are enticed to commit robbery either on the land or sea, and the sons of rapine say to you, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause : Let us swallow them up alive as the grave, and whole, as those who go down into the pit : We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil : Cast in thy lot among us, let us all have one purse : My son, walk not thou in the way of them ; refrain thy foot from their path. For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood. Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird. Thou seest thy danger ; thou seest that a snare is prepared for thee ; and unless thou art more foolish than a bird, thou canst avoid it. For they lay wait for their own blood, they lurk privily for their own lives. So is the

way of every one who is greedy of gain ; who taketh away the life of the owner thereof.

2. If you are enticed to any other species of dishonesty, which, though not so immediately exposed to the vengeance of human laws, is however not less criminal than robbery, and not less odious in the sight of God ; combat the temptation with manly courage. If any gain is proposed to you, which you must acquire by equivocation, by sinister means ; if it is suggested to you that the guilt will be lessened by being divided among a multitude ; that you will escape detection ; that you will still preserve your reputation for integrity ; turn, I beseech you, a deaf ear to the enticing words : For though man does not discover the fraud, yet God sees it ; and though human laws do not condemn you, yet the just Judge of all the earth will assuredly punish you. Nay, the time will soon come, when you will be both condemned and punished by man. Your reputation, which is not yet blown upon, will ere long be tainted. The success of your first crime will lead you on to commit more. A habit of fraud will be acquired and confirmed. Your character will be known. You will be sensible yourself that it is known ; and that you merit and receive the scorn and detestation of your neighbors. You will, at length, dare to be an open cheat, and to show your brazen forehead without a mask.

3. If you are enticed to gaming, let not a fear of appearing unfashionable or penurious induce you to yield. Many alluring, but false arguments will be laid before you. You will be told, that it is impossible to keep large companies in spirits without play ; and that it is

not easy to play with delight, unless the attention is kept awake by a motive of interest. It will be hoped, that you are not afraid of your money ; and that you are not so mean as to be afflicted with the loss of a few shillings. In answer to these arguments, show by the cheerfulness of your behaviour, that gaming is not necessary to keep up your spirits. Manifest by the ingenuity of your conversation, and your address in making others converse ingeniously, that you have the power of entertaining others, and of being entertained yourself. Prove by your donations to the poor, and your readiness to risk your property on all lawful occasions, that parsimony has no place in your breast. But if by a conduct founded on these principles, you find that you cannot act your part in large companies with success ; you know what you have to choose : You must preserve your innocence even should you be thought unfashionable ; you must, though you should be derided as scrupulous, resist the temptations which would impair your virtue. That gaming may be, and that it generally is, pernicious and criminal, you cannot deny. For not to mention that it puts an effectual stop to that flow of sentiment which is both entertaining and instructive ; not to mention that it impairs the health, and causes the roses of the complexion to fade, by the midnight watches which it occasions ; not to mention these things, it is well known that it introduces ungracious passions into the mind. Can you game deeply, without feeling that the fiend of avarice has taken full possession of your souls ? Are not your breasts distracted with anxious hopes and fears ? Are not your tempers irritated ? Are not the few words, which you speak, either peevish or boisterous ? Do you not regard him who wins from you, as your enemy ?

and do you not, when you lose, sink into despondency ? If you answer the questions in the affirmative, as you know they must be answered, to what do you sacrifice your health and your happiness, the tranquillity of your minds, and the gentleness of your tempers ? To the love of pleasure ? No ; but to the love of gain. Pleasure is your plea ; but avarice is your motive. This foul passion exposes you to the hazard of defrauding the poor, your family, your own creditors, of their just dues, by what you lose ; or of defrauding the families and creditors of others, by what you win. For this do you forego the sweets of domestic life, and the harmless amusements, which are found at home, and which neither impair your estate, nor fill your heart with remorse.

4. If you are allured to intemperance by the votaries of pleasure ; if you are invited to take a part in the scenes of intoxication ; let not any flattering promise of merriment beguile you. For consider who hath wo ? who hath sorrow ? who hath contentions ? who hath babbling ? who hath wounds without cause ? who hath redness of eyes ? They who tarry long at the wine, they who go to seek the strongly seasoned wine. Look not upon the wine, when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. So says Solomon ; and changing the form of his questions, we may ask, Does not intoxication introduce embarrassment into your worldly affairs ? Does it not deprive you of the confidence of your neighbors ? Does it not subject you to wounds, and at last to the entire loss of health ? In the revels of drunkenness, are not all your joys madness ? Man is not made for the transports which you



suppose wine will afford. When his pleasures pass a certain boundary, their nature is changed, and they become pains. Have you not ever found it to be so, you have gone to the house of riot, with the expectation of finding exquisite delight, but have returned with disappointment and vexation? Why then will you, when thus instructed by experience, obey the delusive call, and yield to the enticing of sinners, who are alluring you to destruction?

5. Finally, if you are enticed to any other sin, yield not to the temptation. In the world, you will find many snares laid for your innocence. Some of them ought not be named; for there are ideas, which in a measure contaminate your purity, by barely passing through the mind. It is sufficient that you know your danger; inquire not too minutely what that danger is. Actions will be proposed to you of so dubious a nature, that you can with difficulty determine whether they are harmless or not; but if you feel any pressure at the heart, avoid them. This reluctance of conscience may possibly be a prejudice of education; but in the hour of temptation it is safest to trust its warning. In a cooler moment afterward, when you are alone, you can examine it; and if you find that it is a mere prejudice, you can reject it from being a principle of conduct. Be ever on your guard against evil, preserving your minds attentive and calm. Continual care and much pains are necessary to maintain your innocence. Your conflict is arduous; but you are animated by the most powerful motives. Remember that the eye of God beholds you, and that whilst you remain virtuous, it beholds you with approbation. Remember the design, for which you were

created ; that you are intelligent beings, moral agents, candidates for immortality. If you courageously resist the enticement of sinners ; if you act your parts well ; if you show yourselves true servants of God, and faithful disciples of Jesus Christ ; you will be placed in a region, where you will be out of the reach of temptation ; where a confirmed habit of virtue will secure you against falling into vice ; and where your moral powers being continually improved, you will increase in knowledge, in holiness, and in felicity to all eternity.

1st. S. in Lent.

# SERMON XVI.

IRRESOLUTION.

---

JAMES I. 6

HE THAT WAVERETH IS LIKE A WAVE OF THE SEA, DRIVEN  
WITH THE WIND, AND TOSSED.

It appears from an examination of the verses, which precede and follow the text, that the design of the Apostle James is to condemn wavering or irresolution in praying to God ; but as he expresses himself in indefinite terms, his sentiment may be applied to other cases. I will thus apply it in the following discourse ; in which I will endeavor to point out the mischievous effects of irresolution, first, in the choice of our religious sentiments ; secondly, in our prudential conduct ; and, thirdly, in our moral conduct.

I. In the choice of our religious sentiments, and an external profession conformable to them, it is pernicious to hesitate too long, or to be irresolute in fixing. It is, I confess, the duty of a Christian to inquire after truth during his whole life, and to preserve his mind open to conviction. If he finds reason to change his sentiments, he ought to do it, nay, he cannot avoid doing it, even when he has passed far beyond the period of youth. There is no want of resolution manifested in this change :

for he ought not to resolve to adhere to doctrines, after he has discovered them to be erroneous. A man of a cool and candid mind will always remain in a state of suspense, where there is not sufficient evidence to determine his opinion. He will not, in this case, suffer prejudice, or fancy, or interest, to turn him; but will persevere in seeking after more light, and will at length yield to nothing except superiority of argument. There are persons, who have materially changed their religious principles late in life. I call them not irresolute; for they have seen sufficient cause for renouncing their former creed. They have acted like honest and humble inquirers, who have not been ashamed to acknowledge that they were wrong, and who have dared to correct their mistakes.

But when we have obtained all the satisfaction, which the nature of the case admits, we ought no longer to hesitate. On each side of almost every question something may be said. For as the human understanding is imperfect and can see in part only, difficulties and objections may appear against probable truths, and may in some measure countenance the opposite errors. In this state of things what is a man to do? He is not to doubt forever; he is not to withhold his belief, because he cannot find absolute demonstration; but he ought to submit to the strongest and most weighty arguments. In choosing, for instance, between the belief of Christianity and deism, a man ought not to waver, because specious objections may be alleged against the gospel; but if arguments preponderate in its favor, if there is a respectable weight of evidence which proves its truth and divinity, he ought to reject deism and to admit Christianity. Again, in choosing between two opposite opinions,

which are each of them supposed by different sects to be doctrines of the bible ; he ought not, because a few obscure texts may be produced in favor of the one, to hesitate in assenting to the other, for which there are many clear passages. I will give an example to illustrate my observation : It is asserted by certain Christians, that good works are not necessary to salvation, an opinion which reason cannot forbear considering as injurious to the cause of virtue, and which therefore we ought not hastily to adopt. It cannot be denied that some dark expressions in St Paul's Epistles, when they are taken separately, appear to give it countenance. But what is the evidence on the other side ? If we examine it, we shall find that the general strain of our Saviour's preaching was this, If ye would enter into life, keep the commandments : that all his Apostles, and even St Paul himself declared, that without holiness no man can see the Lord ; and that these obscure texts, when they are compared with the whole of his writings, fairly admit of a different interpretation. To hesitate therefore between these two opinions, on account of the trifling objections which may be urged on one side, discovers a degree of irresolution and weakness of mind of which a Christian and rational man ought to be ashamed. If we determine not to assent to probable arguments, but to waver whilst a shadow of objection can be found, we shall either pass our lives without any religious opinions, or we shall continually wander from one opinion to another. That this is a pernicious state of mind no one can deny. For it must be acknowledged by all, that there is such a thing as truth, and that it is of importance to believe it. He who is irresolute in believing it, to make use of the com-

parison of the text is like a wave of the sea, which is perpetually agitated and driven about by the winds.

The mischievous effects of irresolution in religion are most fully displayed in our refusing to admit, and neglecting to act upon, the consequences of our principles. We are chargeable with wavering, when we hesitate between old prejudices and what we now discern to be truth. We are afraid of taking any steps contrary to what we have been accustomed to, though our reason is convinced of their propriety. We hesitate and deliberate, even after we have obtained sufficient light on the subject: and because our conduct would be new to ourselves, we delay to act. Does not this spirit of irresolution betray us into gross inconsistencies? We believe, for instance, and are fully persuaded, that ceremonies do not constitute the essence of religion; but we dare not say so, or conduct ourselves as if we thought so, lest it should afterwards turn out to be a falsehood. Let us, my brethren, act uniformly and steadily. Let us carefully inquire after truth; but after we have found it, let us live conformably to it, and pursue it through all its consequences. We need not be afraid of doing so; for a good cause must necessarily produce good effects, and truth, the best of all causes, can never lead to anything which is evil. But if the consequences of our opinions appear injurious to piety or virtue, we ought not to be in haste to act upon them, and we ought to apprehend that there is some defect in them, and we ought carefully to review them, and endeavor to find out where the fallacy lies.

II. I proceed, in the second place, to point out the mischievous effects of irresolution in our prudential conduct. The proper meaning of the word *prudence* is

practical wisdom ; but when we speak of prudential conduct, we commonly intend those actions, which are not absolutely either virtuous or vicious, but which are salutary or detrimental, according to the nature of them, and which may terminate either in virtue or vice. Good men are sometimes destitute of prudence, and, by their heedless conduct, they involve themselves in difficulties, from which they derive almost every species of misery, except remorse of conscience. This principle therefore is one, to which we ought strictly to attend : and we ought carefully to inquire, not only what conduct is the most virtuous, but also what is the best, the wisest, and the most expedient for us, in the situation in which we are placed. In a word, we ought to propose to ourselves a prudential plan of life, not of what we think will be the most pleasant at the present moment, but what we judge will be most beneficial in the end. There are many persons who have discernment and ability enough to form a plan ; but they fail in resolution in putting it in execution. They suffer the best concerted schemes to be defeated by the impulse of the moment, by passion, or by the too great ease of their tempers. Thus they continue during life to form resolutions, which they never execute except in part. From such irresolution great mischief results. Their systems may be wise ; but they are exposed to the same inconveniences, as if they acted without *any* system. They are unstable and uncertain in their conduct, and cannot depend on the operation of any one of their schemes, because they have not sufficient resolution to carry them into effect.

From real life many examples can be produced, which show the truth of these remarks. I will mention two. The circumstances of a man may be such, that he is un-

der the indispensable necessity of practising the strictest economy. He is aware of it : and as he honestly wishes to do justice to his creditors and his family, he forms a plan, which, if adhered to, will, in a few years, retrieve his affairs, and enable him afterward to live with more freedom. But he suffers these wise resolutions to be defeated by invitations to parties of pleasure, by the fear of appearing parsimonious, by the desire of still keeping up some external splendor, and by other motives, which ought to have no influence upon a man of good sense. For what is the opinion of the world to a person, who cannot obtain the smallest relief from the companions of his pleasures, who would not respect him less for his frugality, and who perhaps even laugh at him for attempting to hide his poverty ? At the end of the limited time, when he promised himself that he should be extricated from his difficulties, he finds himself still more embarrassed in his circumstances ; and all this evil proceeds from the want of resolution.

Again, a man may be convinced that it is prudent to avoid the society of certain persons, not perhaps because they are not innocent, but because they do him no good, because they are either too much below, or too much above him, or because he cannot persist in visiting them, without running the risk of impairing his honor, or from numberless other motives, of which he may feel the force, but which it is unnecessary for me particularly to enumerate. He resolves therefore to go no more ; but goes the next day. He resolves again ; and again breaks his resolution. He binds himself by a solemn oath to keep his determination, observes it for a short time, but, in the end, violates his oath as well as his promises. I am describing here no unusual event. Such instances of irresolution take



place every day : and by such unstable determinations are men driven about, like the waves of the sea, when it is tossed by the wind.

III. I proceed, in the last place, to point out the mischievous effects of irresolution in our moral conduct. The duties of morality are obvious and certain. We cannot always determine what is true in speculation ; we are sometimes at a loss to determine what is the most prudent in conduct ; but we are in most cases able to ascertain what is pleasing to God, and conformable to the rule of right. Hence it is, that though men differ somewhat in their maxims of prudence, and still more in their religious opinions, yet they are in general agreed in their ideas of virtue and vice. They know what they ought to do, and they determine to do what is right. But notwithstanding this knowledge, it is in our moral conduct that irresolution is most frequently displayed. The causes of it are manifest. They proceed from two principles in our constitution, which our Maker has been pleased to bestow upon us with wise and benevolent purposes. One of these principles is passion ; and the other, the power of habit. By passion we are impelled to avoid pain and pursue pleasure ; but as, by the violence of its emotions, it would lead us astray, God has given us reason, to restrain and direct it. By the power of habit are we enabled to acquire knowledge, to execute whatever we do with ease, and to obtain a uniformity of conduct, and a fixed and permanent character. If we were destitute of passion, we should be mere lifeless masses of matter, without energy in our conduct, without taste, without sympathy, without social affections, without devotion in our religion ; and if we were destitute of the

power of habit, we could be certain of no acquisition whatever ; even a virtuous character itself would be insecure ; and a man, who had never committed a deed of wickedness, would be as liable to fall into vice, as he who had been corrupt. But these necessary principles, like everything else in human nature, may be perverted from their original design. When reason is discarded, and passion is suffered to take the helm, as well as to fill the sails, we shall be agitated like the waves of the sea, and driven far from our true course ; a corrupt habit will gradually be formed, and the bad man will find it as difficult to perform a virtuous action, as the good man does to commit a vicious action. It is when these corrupt habits prevail, and whilst they are beginning to prevail, that the fatal effects of irresolution are discovered. We resolve to be pious, to be holy, to repent of our sins, to lead new lives ; but vicious habits have obtained such a dominion over us, that it is extremely painful to execute our purposes. We resolve again, and bring nothing to pass. We determine to break off from a vicious practice, and never more to be guilty of it ; but in the moment of temptation, all our resolution forsakes us. In the meantime, our conscience pierces us with its sharp stings. The fancied pleasure which we pursued is gone, and nothing is left but anguish of mind. We again resolve ; and pray to God most fervently, that he would strengthen our resolution. We say, The evil may yet be repaired : Surely I have vigor of soul enough to preserve myself from destruction. But passion suddenly seizes the reins : We combat awhile with feeble opposition : We feel ourselves sinking : We lift up our eyes to heaven, afraid to ask, because we know that we do not deserve assistance : We yield, and a faint uneasiness only remains : passion

subsides, and we once more awake to the consciousness of our misery and guilt. Thus we go on resolving, and breaking our resolves, confirming by every fresh crime our corrupt habits, and rendering it more and more difficult to keep our resolutions. At length we conclude from our melancholy experience, that it is impossible to conquer our passions; we give up the attempt in despair; and abandon ourselves to the torrent of vice.

The deplorable effects of this irresolution should teach us to resist evil in the beginning. We should not suffer bad habits to become confirmed; but restrain our passions, whilst they are capable of being restrained. We should combat the spirit of irresolution, with the conviction that it gives strength to vice, and that the more frequently we break our resolutions, the harder it is to keep them. But should we be deeply plunged in wickedness, shall we not attempt to extricate ourselves? Shall we resign ourselves to despair, and die in a state of guilt, because it requires courage to be virtuous? If we value either our present or future happiness, let us rouse ourselves. Vicious habits are hard to be subdued; but they are not invincible. Many instances can be produced of abandoned sinners, who have reformed, and who have become afterward patterns of virtue. Let these examples encourage us, and inspire us with emulation. Let us once more resolve to change our conduct; and let us fortify our minds with every motive, which will induce us to keep our resolutions. In particular, whilst we recollect our frequent relapses, let us flee from temptation. The most usual cause of the irresolution of sinners is, that they do not cautiously avoid the situations, where their virtue is in danger. Our passions, when the objects of them are out of sight, are not

so apt to be inflamed. Let us banish ourselves from them ; which we can do, if we please. If we choose, we can abstain from the society of the wicked, and from many other temptations, by which we may be seduced.

Human life is a state of warfare ; but it is a state of warfare to them only, who are rendered irresolute by the long practice of vice : It is a state of peace to them, who are experienced in the way of salvation. Should it however be as difficult, as it is sometimes represented, to attain to innocency, are not the rewards, with which God has promised to crown it, sufficient to counterbalance the difficulty ? Should a life of virtue be a life of pain, at the worst, it can last only a few years ; and it will be succeeded by immortal happiness. Let this motive animate us to persevere. Let it render us resolute and courageous : Our race is short ; but the prize is eternal. In fine, my beloved brethren, let us be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

2d. S. in Lent.

## SERMON XVII.

THE TENDERNESS OF JESUS CHRIST.

---

JOHN XIX. 26, 27.

WHEN JESUS THEREFORE SAW HIS MOTHER, AND THE DISCIPLES STANDING BY, WHOM HE LOVED, HE SAITH UNTO HIS MOTHER, WOMAN BEHOLD THY SON. THEN SAITH HE TO THE DISCIPLE, BEHOLD THY MOTHER.

THE virtues, which Jesus displayed during his life, shone with the greatest lustre in its closing scenes. Such an assemblage of divine graces then appeared in his character, that the grateful Christian contemplates it with love, delight, and admiration. Happily the evangelical writers are sufficiently minute in the concluding chapters of his history, which constitute the most affecting parts of the Gospels. We here see a personage, of sublime dignity and heroic fortitude, voluntarily submitting to pain and death, that he may promote the most important of all purposes, the glory of God, and the felicity of mankind.

Among the virtues, which he manifested on this occasion, none was more conspicuous than his tenderness. By tenderness I mean the soft affection, which filled his susceptible heart, his kind attention to his friends, and his anxiety for their happiness. This will be my theme

at present ; and I purpose, in the first place, to consider it ; and, secondly, to show what inferences we should draw, and what practical uses we should make of the subject.

I. In treating of the tenderness of our Saviour, it may be sufficient to mention some of the instances of it, which are recorded in his history, without dwelling on them particularly ; for there is always danger, if we expatiate on them, of weakening their effect by too diffuse a style, or by cold exclamation. The Evangelists have related them with so much simplicity and pathos, that we cannot, by adopting an expanded manner, render them more forcible. Passing by the instances, which appear in the former parts of the Gospels, I will remind you of those, which took place at the close of this life.

1. The first instance, which I shall mention, is the tenderness of our Lord to the family of Lazarus. There must have been something very amiable in the character of this young man and his two sisters ; for it is said by St John, that Jesus loved them. When therefore Lazarus died, though our Saviour was determined to restore him to life by his miraculous power, yet he was much affected with the sorrow of his sisters, and he wept at their tears. The Jews, who were present, were so struck with his tenderness to the deceased, that they could not forbear saying, Behold how he loved him. The sensibility, which, amidst the display of his majesty, our Lord discovered on this occasion, renders his character extremely interesting. He thought it not beneath his dignity to mingle his tears with the tears of the afflict-

ed sisters, and to exert his kind attention, and to make use of soothing words to comfort their hearts. He becomes the object of affliction and delight ; but we do not perceive that he debased himself by cherishing and expressing the feelings of tenderness.

2. The second instance of the tenderness of our Saviour, of which I would remind you, is that which he manifested to his disciples in his last conversation with them. I refer particularly to the account of it, contained in the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of St John's Gospel. It would be too long to repeat at this time ; nor is it necessary, as you have the New Testament in your hands, and can read it in the Evangelist's own affectionate language. The whole is one display of tenderness. Your hearts will burn within you, whilst you peruse it, particularly such passages as the following : " Let not your hearts be troubled : ye believe in God ; believe also in me. I will not leave you comfortless ; I will come to you. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you ; continue ye in my love. This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Ye now have sorrow ; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

3. After these compassionate addresses, our Saviour retired to the garden of Gethsemane, where he suffered inexpressible agony of body and mind ; but amidst the horrors, by which he was surrounded, his tender-

ness did not forsake him ; for he kindly excused the disciples, who accompanied him, and who fell asleep through sorrow : The spirit, said he, indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

4. The look, which he gave to Peter, when, in the presence of his Lord, he denied that he knew him, may be interpreted in the same manner. It reproved him for his inconstancy ; but it reproved him with tenderness. It condemned the cowardice of his friend ; but it conveyed pity for his frailty. The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter, and that affectionate look immediately filled the heart of the disciple with sorrow and repentance.

5. The address, which he made to the women, who accompanied him to Calvary with tears and lamentations, and who probably were his relations or friends, breathes the same spirit. And there followed him, says St Luke. a great company of people, and of women, who also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me. but weep for yourselves and for your children.

6. But the most remarkable instance of the tenderness of our Saviour is contained in the text. In order to conceive of the sublimity of this tenderness, it is necessary to advert to the situation of Jesus. He was fixed to a cross, on which he was suspended, not by cords, but his whole weight was supported by the wounds, which the nails had made in his hands and feet. The nerves of those sensible parts were cruelly lacerated ; and he knew that he should hang in this manner, till by



a lingering death of agony his spirit departed from him. The people and their rulers were passing by and reviling him. The greatest part of his disciples had abandoned him, and left him to his fate : for none appear to have been present, except John, his mother, and two or three other women. A horrible darkness overspread the land of Judea. In this awful situation, when both the comforts of friendship and the light of heaven were withdrawn, it is not surprising that he should fear that his Father had forgotten him, and that he should cry out in the anguish of his soul, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?* But amidst this terror and this agony, his tenderness was as much alive as ever ; and when he saw at the foot of the cross his mother, compassion for her grief and anxiety for her future welfare almost erased the idea of his own suffering. Directing therefore a look of affection, first to Mary, and then to the beloved John, he saith to his mother, *Woman, behold thy son.* Then saith he to the disciple, *Behold thy mother.*

II. Such was the tenderness of Jesus. Inferences may be drawn, and practical uses made of the subject.

1. The tenderness of our Saviour adds one proof to the many others, which may be alleged, of the truth of his history, and the divinity of his mission. The character of Jesus, compounded as it is of sublime and amiable qualities, can be demonstrated by sound philosophy to be the only one which is truly great. But before the period, in which it was exhibited, no example of it had ever appeared on earth ; nor had imagination ever risen so high as to conceive it, though imagination had

taken many adventurous flights. The model is not to be found among any of the civilized nations of antiquity : the Evangelists therefore could not have copied it from their writings. It could not have been taken from the Hebrew scriptures ; because the character of Jesus is as much superior to that of Noah, Daniel, Job, or any other of the worthies of the Old Testament, as their characters are to those of Achilles or Agamemnon. The Evangelists, in describing it, seem hardly to have been conscious of what they were doing. They were men destitute of genius and invention, and appear not to have aimed to draw a perfect character ; for one of them has not portrayed the whole. Like four painters, they have worked on the same piece : one has given a feature or an outline, which another has omitted : but there is not a redundant stroke : and from their combined labors has arisen an harmonious, a godlike form, which is the wonder and delight of heaven and earth. The conclusion therefore is, that they have not drawn a fiction, but that the image of their Lord was before them ; and that the portrait possesses such exquisite symmetry, because it is painted from real life. The unexampled perfection of the character of Jesus has always made a deep impression on the minds of those, who have studied human nature, and who have perused with care the pages of history. It could not have been invented ; it must have existed ; and if it existed, his religion is true. The external evidence of Christianity is of great force ; but this particular species of internal evidence is nearly irresistible.

2. The character of Jesus is proposed as a model for imitation : It is your duty therefore, my brethren, to imitate it as far as you can. You should copy his tender-

ness. There are few of you, who do not ardently desire to die, like your Saviour, with tenderness in your hearts. You cannot forbear to reflect sometimes on death ; and whatever lives you may lead, however obstinate may be your tempers, however harsh your words, however unkind your behaviour, and however implacable your resentments, you cannot endure the thought of leaving the world with such manners and feelings. If any sparks of affection are left in your bosoms,—and in whose breast are they totally extinguished?—you fondly hope, that in your last moments they will be enkindled into a vivid flame. In your imaginations you sometimes paint to yourselves the manner, in which you shall give up your spirits. You cannot promise yourselves, that you shall die with complete fortitude, with perfect resignation to the divine will ; but you hope that you shall die with good will in your souls. You anticipate a disease, which may be lingering and painful, but which will not deprive you of your reason. There will be assembled round your death bed the objects of your affection ; the person, with whom you have been sometimes provoked, but who has still been always the nearest your heart ; the children, who are dear to you ; the domestics, who have served you faithfully ; and the friends, who have rendered life pleasant. To some you will give affectionate advice ; and to all you will speak words of kindness. They will anxiously watch over you ; and they will lament your death with unfeigned tears of the tenderest sorrow.

Such is the pleasing picture, which the imagination of those Christians, who possess any goodness of heart, delights to paint. But it is not given to many to die in this manner. For some are tormented with such re-

morse of conscience, that they have no other idea than a dread of future punishment; and their hearts being filled with an apprehension of misery, there is no room in them for the benevolent affections. Others lose sight of the friends, to whom their tenderness is due, amidst the crowds of admiring spectators, who surround their beds, and who are called in to hear their last vain speeches, and to witness their intrepidity in death. Some die with acute pain; and not being able, like Jesus, to rise above it, they have no thought except that of their own agony. Some die suddenly, without having an opportunity of addressing their friends; others die at a distance from them: and many have their senses and reason so disordered, that they are incapable of speech, and even of reflection.

This being the usual state of things, it behooves you, my brethren, not to postpone your love to your friends, and your forgiveness to your enemies, to your last moments, but to treat them with tenderness, whilst you are in health. The text particularly refers to the case of you, who are sons. A brave and grateful son would be willing to die in defence of his mother. But to this you will not be called; nor will you probably, like Jesus, be required to commit her, in your last moments, to the care of a faithful friend. Wait not, till her last sickness, or your own, draws from you expressions of tenderness: Now is the time to comfort and bless her. Make her happy with your attention, your kindness, your good name, your virtue. What shall we say of a son, who, instead of cherishing his mother, plunges a dagger in her breast by his vices? what of a son, who, instead of living to be her support and defender, by debauchery, or other criminal practices, voluntarily deprives himself of existence, and leaves her in her old age helpless and in misery?

The spirit of the text applies to other relations beside that of a son. There are evils in life ; but the worst of them proceed from the want of tenderness to your friends : from your irascible passions ; from your resenting the injuries of those, who immediately surround you ; from your proud, unyielding, and implacable dispositions ; from your harsh speeches ; from your rude and unkind behaviour. How many persons might become happy, if they would fill their hearts with mildness and tenderness ! Some of you are wretched ; and the cause is, that you cast from you the means of felicity, that you rashly squander the precious treasures of life. One after another, the friends, who, notwithstanding your injuries and resentments, are on the whole dear to you, will be taken away ; and when they are in their graves, you will then think with regret on your want of tenderness to them, and the happiness which you have irretrievably lost.

I conclude with observing, that it is not the design of this discourse to contract your affection. In imitation of your benevolent Saviour, it is your duty to wish well, and to the extent of your power to do good, to all men. But the love of mankind is nothing more than the love of individuals, whom either you have seen, or of whom you have heard, or of whom you can form an image in your mind. As objects, which are near, are more in your heart, than objects, which are at a distance, your tenderness must, of necessity, be confined, for the most part, to those within your reach ; to the friends, with whom you daily converse ; to the poor, who pass under your eyes ; to your fellow citizens ; to the members of the society, whether christian or any other, with whom

you are associated. By loving and doing good to these persons, you will produce a habit of benevolence, which, as opportunity occurs, will be extended to others of your fellow men, with whom you are more remotely connected. It must be confessed that the regard, which a selfish man feels for his family, who loves his children, merely because they are parts of himself, and because they add to his importance and pride, has very little effect in producing this habit of benevolence. But where children, parents, or brethren, are loved for their own sakes; where real good will exists in the heart; where there is a spirit of meekness and condescension; there the man, who is most tender to his friends, will generally be most beneficent to others. Such tenderness ought not to be styled selfish; for it requires much humility, self-denial, and mental discipline. It is a good affection, which is enlarged by the repetition of its outward acts; and it resembles an exuberant river, which is not always confined within its banks, but which frequently overflows and enriches the adjoining fields. Fear not then, that your tenderness will render you selfish; but be kind and condescending to the friends, whom you daily see, and to whom you have an opportunity of doing good; and do not afflict yourselves, because your power is limited, and you cannot bless those, who are out of your reach. The time, we hope, will come, when, in another world, your capacities will be increased, and you can promote the felicity of innumerable beings, whom on earth you have never beheld.

Good Friday.

## SERMON XVIII.

THE IMMORTALITY OF MAN, THE CONSEQUENCE OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

---

JOHN XIV. 19.

BECAUSE I LIVE, YE SHALL LIVE ALSO

THE doctrine of immortality was believed by the ancient Greeks, at least as long ago as the time of Homer. The Persians were in possession of it at a remote period, and probably by the instructions of Zoroaster.\* The Israelites had some obscure intimations of it from Solomon; and perhaps the Arabians received it, though still more obscurely, from Job. That Daniel was acquainted with it, there can be no doubt: but he says nothing very particular on the subject. Others of the Hebrew writers contain hints, and nothing more; for it was not completely manifested by divine revelation till the time of our Saviour, when life and immortality were brought to light by his gospel. In what manner the ancient heathen became acquainted with it, whether by a tradition derived originally from a divine communication, or by a lucky conjecture, it is difficult to say. If from the former, it had suffered, like every other branch of true theol-

\* See Prideaux's Conn. Part I. B. 4.

ogy, many alterations, in passing through their hands: their ideas of it were fanciful; and as none of them supposed that the immortality of man depended on his resurrection from the dead, it is not easy to reconcile their notions of it with the doctrine of the sacred scriptures. The arguments alleged by the ancient philosophers in favor of immortality, and which have been brought forward again by several modern writers, are, it is confessed, of some weight; and after the truth is discovered by a divine revelation, they tend more strongly to confirm it: but they are not sufficient to demonstrate the doctrine; for neither did they satisfy the minds of those ancient philosophers, as one of the ablest of them acknowledges, nor do they satisfy ours. The only satisfactory evidence, which we have of the doctrine, is derived from the New Testament. If the gospel is the genuine word of God, man will be immortal; but if the gospel is a fable, man may be immortal, but we cannot prove that he is. Our hope depends on Christ: he is the author of the resurrection and the life. We shall live forever if there is to be a resurrection from the dead; but there will be no resurrection from the dead, if Christ is not risen, if he is not now alive, if he has not received power from the Father to call the dead from their tombs. A restoration to life being a point of the utmost importance to man, the resurrection of Christ is of consequence the primary article of the Christian religion. In this light it is viewed by Christians in general. It is not to be wondered at therefore, that they should universally appropriate to the public worship of God the day of the week, on which Jesus arose from the dead: and that many churches should, in addition to this, devote a par-



ticular day of the year to the commemoration of the great event. This is the day, which we now consecrate ; a day, which the Lord has made : a day, which should fill the heart of every believer with joyful hope and grateful exultation.

The subject, which on this festival we are called to consider, is the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and its consequence, the immortality of man. This cause and its happy effect are both contained in the text : *Because I live, says our Saviour, ye shall live also.*

I. The first part of the text is, that Christ arose from the dead, and is now alive. It is not my design at present to dwell on this head ; because it would be impossible to do justice to it in one discourse ; for though the argument is sufficiently clear, yet it consists of many parts, all of which require an ample discussion. I will only observe at this time, that our belief of the resurrection of Christ, and the demonstration of its truth, are derived from the testimony of credible witnesses, such as we should admit in any other case : from that of the Roman soldiers, who guarded his tomb, and who saw him rise ; of the women, who visited it at an early hour, and perceived that the body was gone, and one of whom spoke to him, before she left the place ; of two disciples, whom he accompanied, as they were going to Emmaus : of the eleven apostles, to whom he frequently appeared, and who had the evidence of all their senses that he was alive ; of above five hundred brethren at once, to the testimony of a majority of whom St Paul boldly appeals ; of St Paul himself, who saw and conversed with him, after he had ascended to heaven ; of the chief men of the Jewish nation, as well as of a large assembly of

the people, in whose presence the apostle Peter openly declared the fact, whilst not one of them durst deny its truth, or attempted to convict him of falsehood: Ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel, be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, God hath raised from the dead. In fine, the truth of the resurrection of Christ is proved by the primitive martyrs, who sealed it with their blood; by the uninterrupted tradition of the church, and other circumstances, which demonstrate the credibility of the books of the New Testament, — because if these books are genuine, if they were really written by the authors whose names they bear, the reports contained in them must of consequence be true; and lastly, it is proved by every argument, which establishes any other part of the Christian religion; because the several facts of the gospel are closely bound together, like the atoms which compose an indissoluble rock, so that if one is firmly fixed, the whole mass becomes immovable. The hints, which I have suggested, are an imperfect sketch of the argument; but I shall be happy, my brethren, if they induce you to look into the books, in which the subject is fully discussed. Every man of impartiality and seriousness, who entertains any doubts, will examine it with care; for it is the most essential of all doctrines: because if Christ lives we shall live also. This constitutes the second part of the text, to which I now proceed.

II. That the dead will be raised, and that men will exist in another state, is asserted everywhere in the New Testament. As this is a point, which no one denies, and as the passages of Scripture, which relate to it,

must be in every one's recollection, it would be superfluous to multiply quotations. It will be sufficient to cite a single text: 'The hour, says our Saviour, is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth.' Taking therefore for granted the truth of the gospel and the resurrection of Christ, there can be no doubt that man is made for immortality. This is a doctrine, which is in the highest degree important, as all must feel, and as I shall endeavor to evince by several considerations.

1. I first observe that the love of life is a natural sentiment of the human heart. The ancient philosophers inferred from this love, that man must be immortal; and though, as has already been hinted, the sentiment is not sufficient alone to discover or prove the doctrine; yet it must be allowed, that after it has been made known by a divine revelation, it corresponds with and strongly confirms it. Though every man knows that other men die, and consequently can have no doubt, that ere long he must die himself: yet perhaps he never does, or can, view himself as in a state of non-existence. He conceives himself still beholding, after death, what passes in the world; and even whilst his body is mouldering in the tomb, as breathing and thinking. These conceptions are not often expressed in words; but we may appeal to any man, who is accustomed to look into himself, whether he does not often feel them in his bosom. The simple and illiterate, who may be said to think aloud, are sometimes heard to speak them openly. — From this strong sentiment of life proceeds in part the affection, which we have for our children, and still more for our grandchildren: we prolong our life, we live over again, in every animate being, who proceeds from us.

The love of a name is nothing more than a particular modification of this love of life. Hence arises the desire to extend ourselves in our works, to impress marks of our existence on everything which passes through our hands. Even the lowest of the vulgar feel this sentiment : They inscribe their names on monuments, not as durable as brass or marble, but the best which they can find, and where they hope to enjoy a kind of immortality. Others of a higher class build houses, which they never can inhabit, that they may be known to be theirs ; and call lands, the fruits of which they can never taste, after their own names. The love of a name is a principle, which operates most powerfully in the breasts of the learned, the heroic, and the ambitious. For this do some men wear out their eyes in writing books ; whilst others wade through blood, that they may live in the memories of their contemporaries and posterity. The desire of posthumous fame is the passion of great minds. It may be thought singular, that they, who disbelieve a future state of existence, should generally be the most anxious to obtain it ; but perhaps, on reflection, it will appear natural enough that men, who do not expect any other life, should wish to secure that of their name. A celebrated atheist, who professed to believe that in a few months he should be nothing more than an insensible heap of dust, at the close of his life, wrote a vain book, in which he describes and extols himself, and makes large demands on posterity for their praise. The licentious poets of ancient times boast in proud language of the perpetual monuments, which they have built to their fame. Alexander, we are informed, undertook the conquest of Persia and India, chiefly for the sake of being celebrated by the orators and historians of Athens ; and the all-conquering hero of the pres-

ent day, whose terrific roar alarms even these distant shores, if we may judge from his arrogant and bombastic language, appears to be governed by a similar motive, and hopes to rival in the opinion of posterity the Atilas, and the Selims, the Genghis-chans, and the Kouli Kans of former ages.

These persons are all great men : but in the eye of the Christian, whose breast is animated with nobler prospects, their ambition is insanity, and their wisdom, folly. He also is filled with the most ardent desires of life : but he hopes for the immortality, not of his name, but his soul. He expects to live, not in the memories of misjudging posterity, but when neither a licentious poet, an immoral philosopher, nor an atheist will be left on earth, when both tigers and heroes will be tamed, when every vestige of tyranny will be removed, when the globe itself will be renovated, and when there will be no longer usurpation, or conquest, or destruction in all the holy mountain of God.

Judge you, my brethren, which hope is most substantial. The life of a name is a mere idea, a phantom, which can be enjoyed a few moments only, by anticipation ; which vanishes away, as soon as a man expires : and which can confer no honor, no pleasure on his unconscious ashes. Besides, if there was anything real in it, it would not be worthy of our anxious pursuit, because experience and history convince us, that few can with reason expect to obtain it. How many of us are there, of whom it will be known a hundred years hence, that we ever existed ? A tasteless antiquary, in poring over an old gazette, may possibly find our names in an obituary ; but as we shall be painted with exactly the same features, and with the same color, as a thousand others

who have preceded us, we shall remain undistinguished in his mind. We have no particular cause to be mortified ; because, like our names, the names of most of our fellow-citizens will soon be sunk in the gulf of oblivion. Even great men, if they have not an opportunity of acting a conspicuous part, or the good fortune to make an important discovery, or to strike out something remarkably brilliant, are not long remembered. The heroes and patriots, who achieved our revolution, and to whom we owe our independence, are fast hastening to the land of forgetfulness. We still talk of eight or ten warriors and statesmen ; but probably, after the lapse of twenty centuries, only one name will be left in our annals. I appeal to history and the sacred scriptures in support of this opinion : Who knows now anything of the generals of Joshua and Cyrus ? or, in later periods, of those of Charlemagne and Alfred ? Authors, who treat original subjects, have a more probable prospect of immortalizing their names, than either statesmen or heroes ; but even with them the chance is small. Of few ancient writers have we ever heard : and even of the authors, who are near our own times, not many are remembered. In truth, time, like a mighty giant, treads down everything before him : he spares here and there a great name, to mark the existence of former ages ; but the rest he tramples under foot, and sinks them in oblivion. But over the immortality of man time has no power. The Christian consoles himself with the thought, that though men may not hear of him, yet that he is known to God. Secure of the remembrance of the Creator, he is raised above all the temptations of the world, and inspired to make the most heroic efforts of virtue.

2. This leads me, in the second place, to observe, that the belief of a future state of existence is in a high degree important; because it supplies a strong motive, to restrain man from sin, and to animate him to the practice of holiness. That the hope of reward, and the fear of punishment, are adapted to make an impression on the human heart, is what no rational person denies, and is what I need not undertake to prove. But if it was supposed that this world is our all, much of this hope, much of this fear, would be taken away; and too many men would become less scrupulous of the means, which they used to obtain the pleasures and advantages that are to be enjoyed here. I mean not to assert, that virtue does not on the whole contribute to our happiness even in this life: for there can be no doubt that it is the cause of felicity in the present state. It must be granted, that the world is a part of the kingdom of God; that it is governed by its infinitely wise and benevolent sovereign, and not by a malignant demon, who has usurped its throne. But though there can be no dispute, that this earth is such as its maker intended it should be, a well contrived piece of work, with marks of intelligence and goodness impressed on every part of it; yet at the same time it must be allowed, that compared with what we are able to conceive, it is a state of imperfection. This imperfection appears to be the necessary consequence of its being a first state, a state of probation, in which moral agents are to begin to form those associations and habits, which will finally result, in another life, in disinterested benevolence and the unbounded love of God. Considering the other world as a magnificent temple, this world may be compared to the porch: it is good and fair, but chiefly so, because it is the introduction to



something which is better and more beautiful. The two states ought always to be viewed as connected together. If we know nothing or believe nothing respecting that which is future, the motives, which ought to govern our conduct, will often be perplexed with mazes and involved in darkness. When we are assaulted by temptation, we shall sometimes not hesitate to taste the pleasures which it offers; for though conscience may make objections; yet we may fancy, that, after all, the evil which it threatens may never take place, or if it does, that it will be transient. We shall sometimes see the wicked man externally prosperous, and not having yet learned by experience, that wealth is not felicity, that honors are not felicity; not being able to look into his heart, and to see the remorse which rends it; and overlooking besides the secret satisfactions, which the virtuous enjoy, but of which he is entirely deprived; we shall think we run no risk in imitating his example, and in seeking the objects of our guilty desires by the same nefarious means, which he has pursued. Ignorant moreover, that God, as the Psalmist expresses it, sets the wicked in slippery places, even in this world, that he is suddenly cast down, and loaded with infamy, we shall fix our eyes on nothing, but the imaginary good which he has acquired, and eagerly snatch the same blessing. A belief of a future state corrects these false notions; for every man whose heart is deeply impressed with it, necessarily concludes that it is folly, that it is madness, to commit a crime, for which he knows he shall be severely punished in another world. That this motive influences the hearts of many there can be no doubt; and the reason why more persons do not appear to be affected by it, probably is, that a secret infidelity lurks in their minds: They believe that



there is no future state of punishment, at least not for them. They are conscious that they practise some of the duties of virtue, — for what vicious man does not ? — and these, they hope, will excuse the omission of the rest. Or they substitute the strength of their faith, their ardent zeal for the dogmas, and ceremonies of the particular church to which they belong, and their imaginary piety, in the place of the essential duties of morality. Being thus right, as they conceive, in their principles, they suppose that they are in no danger of falling into any damnable sins. They pluck therefore the fruits of vice, which strongly tempt their sight, such as the inheritance of the widow and the portion of the fatherless. In the meantime they do not feel entirely at ease within ; but this very uneasiness gives them comfort ; because they flatter themselves that it is godly sorrow and evangelical contrition. They die, as they have lived, without making restitution to those whom they have wronged ; but they trust that they shall escape future punishment ; because they do not depend for salvation on their own good works, but rely entirely on the strength of their faith. These erroneous ideas prevent the doctrine of a future state of punishment from having its proper influence on the minds of some of the wicked : but after all, there are so many who believe it, and so many who, notwithstanding their false theological opinions, are duly affected by it, that it produces the most beneficial consequences. It renders vice and impiety less common than they otherwise would be ; and whilst it induces us to qualify ourselves to become inhabitants of another world, it promotes the order and harmony, the tranquillity and happiness of society in the present state.

3. I observe, thirdly, that the doctrine of immortality is of great importance, because it is the best comfort under affliction. The true Christian, when he loses his wealth, consoles himself with the reflection, that he has laid up his treasures in a place where neither moth nor rust corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal. When he is deprived of his health, he is soothed with the hope, that he shall soon go to a world, where there will be no more sickness and pain, but where he shall eat of the tree of life, the fruit of which will heal every malady, and exclude every pang. When his friends die, his grief is chased away by the belief, that they are not destroyed, but only removed. What satisfaction is there in thinking, that we shall again meet the virtuous companions of our youth, who though they have been dead many years, we have not yet forgotten ; that we shall meet our father, our mother, our children, our friends, who was dearer to us than our own soul ! We shall meet them : — But this supposes that we shall know our friends in the other world : And what reason have we to fear that we shall not ? On the contrary, have we not cause to wonder that it should ever be made a question ? Shall we remember nothing which passed on earth ? Shall we forget the most essential duties, which we performed here, the duties of parents and children, of brothers and husbands, the very virtues which have admitted us into paradise ? and if we remember the duties, shall we not recognise the friends who were their objects ? Shall we forget all our good feelings and fond affections ? Will there be no friendship, no love there ? Shall we not be conscious, that we are the same individuals that we were in this state ? and if we possess such consciousness, how can it possibly be con-

ceived that we shall not know our friends? This hope cheers the mind of a Christian; but the man who disbelieves a future state, has no firm support, when he meets with affliction. He is either obliged to fly for relief to amusements, for which he has then no relish; or he is compelled to harden his heart, that it may not be penetrated by the sharp points of grief. He may succeed and shut out misery; but in the meanwhile he excludes everything, which deserves the name of felicity. He had a heart of flesh, and he has turned it into stone. He has now no anxiety, when his friends are sick; and he feels no sorrow, when they die: but he has no sympathy, no tenderness; he knows nothing of the delights of friendship, or the joys of love.

4. I observe, in the fourth place, that immortality is not only a comfort to the afflicted, but that it is also a consoling doctrine to the prosperous. Some of you, my hearers, possess health, and youth, and admiring friends: the world smiles on you; your hearts beat high with ardent expectations; and every object promises you a new pleasure. Others of you have wealth, and honors, and comely and well-disposed children, who both obey and love you, who are daily improving in knowledge and good habits, and on whom you depend for comfort and support in your declining years. These things are all charming: It is fervently to be wished that they may last, and that you may not be disappointed in your fond anticipations. You have now such a taste for happiness, that you must be very unwilling to lose it. But you know it cannot continue long in the present world. Youth and all its pleasures are passing rapidly away: you will soon be in the middle of life, and ere long on

the confines of old age. Those of you, who have reached either of these terms, cannot promise yourselves a lasting continuance of your prosperity. Time is giving you repeated warnings, that you will soon be summoned to depart. He is daily robbing you of a part of yourselves; breaking your teeth, tearing away your hair, stiffening your limbs, covering your face with wrinkles, untuning your voice, quenching the fire of your eyes, and impairing your memory. The wealth and honors, which you possess, those who are younger than you are eagerly snatching from you; and if not, you cannot carry them away; you will soon lie down in the grave, and leave them all behind you. Is it not then desirable that there should be a state, in which your youth will be restored and rendered immortal; in which you will receive your bodies cured of every defect; and in which, though you do not recover your wealth and honors, you will obtain what is infinitely more valuable? Is not this what you all wish? and must not the prosperous in particular most ardently desire, that there may be truth in the doctrine, which promises them a restoration of their felicity with unfading lustre and never ceasing improvement?

I have thus endeavored to show, that the doctrine of a future state of existence is in a high degree important. Some persons however may be ready to inquire, Is it also, as you pretend, a consoling doctrine? If men are immortal, is there not reason to apprehend that few of them will enjoy a happy immortality; that the greatest number will be miserable in the other world? To remove this doubt I ought not to contradict myself, and say that there is no misery after death. It is a doctrine

of the Scriptures, that the wicked will be punished in the state beyond the grave; and this doctrine is conformable to reason. Pain is the unavoidable effect of vice; for if virtue produces pleasure, what is opposite cannot also produce it. Whilst therefore the sinner exists, he must exist in a state of misery. If his life is restored, his wretchedness, which is only another word for punishment, must be restored at the same time. Nor can he justly complain of this constitution; for everything which he suffers is his own fault: it is what he might have avoided, if he had so pleased: the offers of salvation were made to him; and he was never placed under an irresistible necessity of sinning. All this is unquestionably true, provided he continues in his iniquities; but whether he will finally be reformed by his sufferings, and whether punishment has a natural tendency to produce this effect, is another question, the consideration of which would lead us into a long inquiry.

Without entering into it at present, I think it my duty to observe, in vindication of the honor of the divine mercy, that as immortality is not, at least since the lapse of Adam, natural to man, but is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ, it can never be believed that so wise and good a being would bestow what is, on the whole, a curse: it must therefore be allowed, that it is not an injury, but an advantage, to the human race in general. Of consequence, any doctrine, which is inconsistent with this supposition, ought immediately to be rejected. God is infinitely benevolent; he hates none of the works which he has made; punishment, as the Scriptures express it, is his strange work, not what he delights in. He will therefore not punish any, more than their iniquities deserve, nor for a longer time than is necessary to promote the purpose of his just government,

which is probably the happiness of the creation. What will be the duration of the misery of the wicked, or their final destiny, I presume not to say : They are in the hands of a merciful God, who knoweth the frame of man, and remembereth that he made him of dust ; I feel no apprehension that he will treat them with cruelty.

If we borrow light from philosophy, we shall have reason to suppose, that there will always be in the universe moral agents in a state of probation ; that there will always be some who are sinning, and some who are under punishment ; and consequently, that in this sense, misery may be said to be eternal. But a just philosophy will teach us, that natural evil is the result of moral evil, of which it is intended to be the cure. This great work has probably been carried on for ages of ages in the kingdom of God. World after world may have been disciplined, punished, renovated, and rendered a fit habitation for immortal beings. We are too apt to imagine that our little planet is the beginning, as well as the centre, of the universe ; but this conception is not agreeable to reason, nor is it authorized by the Scriptures. All the information which Moses gives us is, that about six thousand years ago, God created the earth, the sun and the moon ; and that he made the stars also : but that many of the fixed stars must have existed ages before that period, and were not created, when the earth emerged from its chaotic state, is evident from the late discoveries of astronomers ; for they have proved, that these stars are at such an inconceivable distance, that though light travels at the rate of twelve millions of miles in a minute, yet that their rays are in reaching us more than a million of years. As we therefore can see them, so long at least must they and the worlds which surround them have existed. This fact overwhelms our minds with astonish-

ment of the grandeur, the unbounded power, the immense goodness of God. May we not without presumption conjecture, that the inhabitants of some of those distant worlds have for ages been in a state of security, free from sin, and enjoying consummate bliss? We in this obscure corner of the creation are still in a state of trial and subjected to discipline: but what have we to fear under the government of a monarch, whose goodness is as unbounded as his empire is extensive? Our globe, it is true, and every living creature which it contains, might be struck out of existence, and would be no more missed in the universe, than a grain of sand from the shores of the ocean: but we need not be alarmed. Though we are inconsiderable, yet we are not overlooked. The mind of God is capable of attending to objects, which are infinitely minute, as well as those which are infinitely vast. He “views with equal eye the fall of a hero or a sparrow:” an atom, or a system, teem with life; and here an emmet blessed, and there the universe.

Whatever may be thought of the conjecture which has been offered, these truths are clear, that virtue is productive of happiness, and that the necessary attendant of vice is misery: that the pain which any being endures, will be no more than he deserves: that sin is a voluntary act; and that the sinner will cease to be punished, as soon as he ceases to transgress the laws of his Maker. These important truths we should impress deeply on our hearts; and we should console our minds with the belief that the Judge of all the earth will do right, that his benevolence exceeds all that we can conceive, and that he is constantly employed in diffusing happiness through every part of the boundless universe.

Easter Day.

# SERMON XIX.

THE EXTENT OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

---

PSALM II. 8.

I WILL GIVE THEE THE HEATHEN FOR THINE INHERITANCE,  
AND THE UTTERMOST PARTS OF THE EARTH FOR THY POSSESSION.

Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, appeared among men, that he might establish a kingdom of righteousness and peace, which should last as long as the world lasts, and become more extensive, than any other that had ever been erected on earth. We have reason therefore to rejoice and give thanks to God at the commencement of his happy reign : for on this day he is declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the holy spirit, by his resurrection from the dead.

There are a few Christians, who maintain, that the Psalm, from which I have taken the text, was composed by David for his son Solomon, and that it exclusively applies to that celebrated monarch. They explain it by a reference to the promises which were made by God to the posterity of Abraham, and in which it was foretold, that the Israelites should subdue the heathen, and extend their dominion from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean, and from the deserts of Arabia to the river Euphrates. These promises, they add, were not fully ac-



complished, till the reign of Solomon : but of him we read in the first book of Kings, that he reigned over all kingdoms, from the river (meaning the Euphrates) unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt.

As the second Psalm however is several times quoted in the New Testament, and applied to Jesus Christ, and as it has been understood by Jewish interpreters to be a prophecy of the Messiah, the text is by Christians in general referred to another, and more glorious son of David than Solomon, to a son, who appeared after the lapse of ten centuries. To his person and character, it is alleged, the language of the Psalmist is more strictly applicable. Of him it may with truth be said, that the heathen are given to him for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. There are in the sacred Scriptures many plain passages, which in their primitive meaning foretell that the kingdom of Christ will be extended over a large portion of the earth. To this head may be referred many predictions of the ancient prophets. In the New Testament the clearest intimations are given, that the kingdom of Christ will in time become very extensive. This appears to be the just interpretation of several parables of the gospel ; and we are expressly assured by our Saviour, that even before the destruction of Jerusalem, the Gospel of the kingdom would be preached in all the world ; by which he probably intended the whole extent of the Roman empire.

By these and other predictions a general expectation has been excited in the breasts of Christians, that the kingdom of the Messiah will continue to spread, and will become more and more extensive, till at last it will comprehend every part of the habitable earth. The extent

of Christ's kingdom is the subject of the present discourse. I will, first, show, in a few words, what progress has hitherto been made in establishing this kingdom ; and, secondly, what accessions it may be expected to receive in future ages.

I. It appears from ecclesiastical history, and from ancient heathen testimony, that, as our Saviour had predicted, the gospel, before the close of the first century, was preached in every country, where the Roman power prevailed. It thence by degrees extended its influence among many of the surrounding independent nations. In the fourth century, it gained a complete triumph over paganism, and became the established religion of the state. As the Roman empire declined, it subdued the barbarous nations which broke that colossal power : so that, before the end of the sixth century, it flourished on all the shores of the Mediterranean, had reached Ethiopia, had penetrated deeply into Asia, and into the middle regions of Europe.

In the following century, the kingdom of Christ was abridged by Mahomet and his followers ; but whilst it lost ground in Asia and Africa, it continued to make progress in Poland, Russia, and Scandinavia ; so that in the thirteenth century it was the established religion of every part of Europe, except the countries, which had submitted to the Mahometan arms. Thus were the kingdoms of this world, according to the prediction of St John, and probably in the sense in which he understood it, made the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ.

At the revival of learning, and in consequence of the spirit of enterprise which it introduced, countries before unknown were laid open to the knowledge of the Europeans. The

love of power and the love of gain carried men in to the remotest parts of the earth ; but whilst their hearts festered with ambition and avarice, they boasted that they were erecting the kingdom of Christ. Attempts were made to christianize the newly discovered nations ; and the gospel was preached on the shores of Africa, in India, and China, and in many of the regions of America. But its triumphs no longer resembled the conquests of the primitive ages : for it was for the most part proclaimed by heralds, who were not worthy to bear the heavenly tidings ; or it was announced to savages, who were so deeply sunk in ignorance and barbarism, that they were not qualified for its reception. On the whole however the kingdom of Christ has been advanced since the revival of learning ; converts have been made ; and the number of Christians, by the increase of the nations, who are the subjects of the Messiah, has been greatly augmented.

II. I proceed, secondly, to consider what accessions the kingdom of Christ may be expected to receive in future ages.

Europe is a well-settled country ; but it is still capable, particularly in Spain and Russia, of affording a subsistence to many additional inhabitants. If the nations of that important quarter of the globe could be persuaded to suspend for fifty years their sanguinary wars, which have laid waste so many of their fertile fields, and overwhelmed so many of their flourishing cities, the destruction of human life would be diminished, and the population, as well as the happiness, of those countries would be vastly increased. Will not nations, who call themselves Christians, in time be mindful of the principles of

their peaceable religion? Will not they, who have gone so far, as to abolish the African slave trade, be willing to go one step further, and to abolish war? The hopes of peacemakers, who pray for the enlargement of the kingdom of the Messiah, have so often been disappointed, that they should not be too sanguine in their expectations: but during the last three centuries, so much has been done in favor of the rights and happiness of man; the Christian religion is so much better understood, and, we may venture to say, its benevolent precepts are so much more frequently practised; and the inhabitants of Europe are so much more numerous, than they were in the dark and barbarous ages; that there is no presumption in anticipating, that their progress toward perfection will not be arrested; and that each new century will see the addition of a large and faithful body of subjects to the kingdom of Christ.

In the meantime the Mahometan power which has long oppressed the countries, where the gospel was first propagated, is apparently declining; and a revolution, which would cause Christianity to become again the predominant religion in Greece, Asia 'Minor, and Syria, would not be unexpected, or exceed in wonder several others, which have lately taken place in the world. Those delightful regions want nothing but the restoration of the kingdom of peace, to render them as populous and as prosperous, as they were in ancient times.

As to America, there is one part of the prospect, which is discouraging. The attempt, which has been made to introduce its savage inhabitants into the kingdom of the Messiah, has been attended with so little success, that sober and experienced men are now ready to abandon it in despair. Not that many of the natives have not become

Christians ; but the melancholy fact is, that it has been found impracticable to preserve or continue the race. Like the wild beasts of the forest, they have disappeared at the approach of the civilized man ; and they have been, during so long a time, and in so many places, wasting away, that it appears to be an established law of divine Providence : and no person, who possesses a knowledge of their manners and history, has now a doubt, that they will soon cease to be a people. But this expectation, gloomy as it may be at the first view, is more adverse to the extension of the kingdom of Christ in semblance, than in reality. The red man disappears, but the white man takes his place ; and where ten of the former roamed, a thousand of the latter dwell in secure habitations. This way of enlarging the dominion of the Messiah was not anticipated by the Christians of former times. But God does not always effect his purposes by the means, which men would prescribe : when however we have seen the event, we are convinced, that it is by better means. Who now can doubt, that this vast continent, filled with civilized Christians, affords a more glorious spectacle in the sight of Heaven, than a few churches of savages, scattered over the land, at immeasurable distances from each other ?— America seems destined to become the largest division of the kingdom of Christ. If the causes, which have hitherto multiplied its population, should continue to operate, at the end of a few centuries it will contain, in its two continents, above a thousand million of white inhabitants, all of whom will call themselves the subjects of Jesus. Whilst the uttermost parts of the earth are thus given to him for his possession, though we lament the melancholy fate of the original inhabitants of America, we should not be sur-

prised, that the Author of nature is producing his important ends, not by supernatural, not even by extraordinary, means, but by the operation of second causes, and in the usual course of his divine administrations.

In several parts of Asia and Africa zealous missionaries are now attempting to diffuse the knowledge of the gospel ; but the success, except in the islands of the Pacific Ocean, does not appear to be great, nor to correspond with the exertions of the Christians, who conduct the work. Every good man, however, must applaud the benevolence and piety, by which they are actuated ; and every candid man must approve the pains, which they have taken to communicate the Scriptures to the inhabitants in their own languages. Possibly the experiment may fail at last ; but it ought not to be abandoned, till after a trial has been made during a number of years, nor till it is found to be absolutely hopeless.

If the Divine being should not see fit to add these parts of the earth to the dominion of his Son, the believer may console his mind with the prospect, that a new field will probably be opened for the triumphs of the kingdom of Christ. On the southeast of Asia lies a continent, in a temperate climate, accommodated to the habits of civilized man. It is already begun to be settled by Europeans ; and judging from past events, we may conclude, that in a few centuries, it will contain many millions of Christian inhabitants.

Such are the accessions, which, without having recourse to the supposition of anything supernatural, the kingdom of Christ may be expected to receive in future ages. God may make use of other natural instruments, which are at present unforeseen by us, as the means which I have pointed out were by our ancestors. But

whatever they may be, there is no cause to apprehend, that the dominion of the Messiah is declining; on the contrary, there are many reasons for hoping, that it will become every day more firm and extensive. That it will finally be a universal dominion, a kingdom which will embrace the whole earth, is what many Christians believe: and it is thought by them that the prophecies of the Scriptures foretell this event. If this opinion, however, embarrasses them in their defence of the gospel against the objections of infidels, they are not obliged to take it for granted. The sacred writers were accustomed to express their ideas with so much strength, that sometimes more met the ear, than was meant to be conveyed to the mind. An instance of this hyperbolical style we have in the seventy-second Psalm, the language of which, however forcible may be its sound, was primarily fulfilled, and was intended to be fulfilled, in the person of Solomon. If hereafter the kingdom of Christ should be found to be universal, the prophecies of the Scriptures may be justly applied to the event; for they admit, though they do not necessarily demand, that explanation: but in the meanwhile it will be sufficient for the defender of Christianity to show, that our Saviour promised that his dominion should be extensive, and that it has become so in effect.

That it may be further enlarged, is the prayer of the benevolent man; because wherever it is established, it diffuses blessings on its subjects. Let us therefore endeavor to increase their number by every means in our power. Whenever an opportunity presents itself of sending the gospel to distant nations, or of converting a heathen from the errors of idolatry to the worship of one



God, let us embrace it with zeal. But if no such opportunity offers, we need not lament, that we are deprived of the power of doing good ; because there are many ways nearer home, in which, with less expense, and with more effect, we can manifest our piety and benevolence. Every exertion, which we make to render religion more intelligible, or to communicate the knowledge of it to them, who are ignorant or unmindful of its salutary truths, contributes to the enlargement of the kingdom of Christ. In particular may we add to the number of his subjects, when we have the will and the power to promote the ease, prosperity, and virtue of our country ; so that, a subsistence being readily obtained, and the lives of the people being not wantonly destroyed by vice, new Christian inhabitants appear throughout the land, and new Christian cities, villages, and churches, are everywhere built.

In effecting this important purpose, it is the duty of all good men to unite their endeavors to remove the causes, which tend to desolate the country, to abridge or destroy the lives of the inhabitants, and to fill their houses with poverty and misery. The two causes, which most frequently have a deadly operation on the happiness and increase of nations, and which consequently prevent the growth of the kingdom of Christ, are intemperance and war.

There cannot be a doubt, that from intemperance proceeds no small part of the wretchedness, which is endured among us. It is time to put a more effectual check on the deleterious vice, than has hitherto been done, — by combinations of masters to withhold the intoxicating draught from their hired servants, — by sup-



pressing the dens of sin, where the poison is sold in small quantities to the idle and dissolute, — by laws of the government, which will increase the price of ardent spirits, — and by continuing the moral and religious exhortations, which have already produced salutary effects.

War is at present removed from our country ; and whilst we are enjoying the blessings of peace, we may be allowed to lift up our voices against it, and to pronounce, that war is of all follies, into which man has fallen, the most absurd, and of all crimes the most destructive of human life and happiness. At the close of the hostilities of the revolution, by which our country was emancipated from the power of the parent state, this sentiment prevailed in the breasts of many of the wise and the good ; and arguments were then urged against war, and some attempts were made to put an end to it forever. With what success this was done, is well known to all who are acquainted with the history of the protracted war, introduced by the French revolution. During that period, the hands of men were more deeply imbrued in blood, than perhaps in any former age of the world. But let not the Christian and the benevolent man be discouraged ; for the arguments against war are stronger than ever ; and the friends of peace are more confirmed in the justness of their conclusions. They who delighted in slaughter, and who wantonly insulted the rights of other nations, gained nothing by their savage fury ; but defeat, exile, heart-burning vexation, and other bolts of divine vengeance fell on them, who roused the world to arms. Now then is the time to speak ; and it is necessary in this country to speak with emphasis ; because the remembrance of the gallant defence, which was made of

some of our cities, and of the victories, which were gained on the ocean and the lakes, has invested the image of battles with splendors, which dazzle the eyes of many of our brave men. They are eager to expose themselves again to the miseries and horrors of war, that they may crown their heads with fresh laurels. But whatever may be the wishes of these ardent men, whose hearts beat high with courage, and who pant for fame, we may hope that they, who possess authority and influence in the government, are too wise to plunge us again into the wretchedness, from which the world is escaped. We may hope, that they who delight in the welfare of mankind, and in the extension of the kingdom of Christ, will continue their exertions in favor of peace ; remembering for their encouragement, that no pious and virtuous effort is ever lost ; that it will certainly obtain a reward in a future state, and that even in the present state, the endeavors of the good have meliorated the face of the earth and the condition of man. Let this, my brethren, be your aim. You will thus honor the king, whose subjects you profess to be ; and you will celebrate his triumphant resurrection in the manner, which he most highly approves.

Easter Day.

## SERMON XX.

FEAR OF PUNISHMENT.

---

HOSEA XIII. 9.

THOU HAST DESTROYED THYSELF.

THE Supreme Being who is infinitely good, as well as infinitely wise and powerful, in creating the children of men. designed them for virtue and happiness. Virtue is valuable for its own sake : it is an object. which we cannot forbear to love and admire, even if it should produce no salutary effects to the individual, by whom it is practised. The good man is a great and honorable character, whether he is happy or unhappy ; and a world filled with virtuous beings is a glorious spectacle, whatever the consequences of their virtue may be. But the value of virtue is much enhanced, when it is found that the natural effect of it is to bless its possessors. God intends us for perfect moral rectitude, because the consequence of it is happiness ; and he forbids whatever is contrary to it, because by transgressing its laws, we render ourselves miserable.

In this view of virtue, as the cause of happiness, we cannot forbear considering every method, which God employs to lead us to it, as an instance of benevolence.

When he says to us, *Be ye holy*, it is the same thing, as if he said to us in other words, *Be ye happy*. With how many means of felicity of various kinds has he provided us ! In the natural world we see and acknowledge the goodness of God. Here one part is adjusted to another, and the happiness of mankind is designed in all. The earth and the vegetables which spring from it, the rain and the clear shining of the sun, the sea and the air, have each a final cause, which is some good to created beings. It is the same thing in the moral world. When God instructs us in his will by the objects, which he presents to our view ; imprints on our bosoms a love of whatsoever things are true, honorable, just, pure, kind, and praise-worthy ; and gives us reason, by which we are enabled to ascertain the nature of actions, and the difference between virtue and vice ; his intention is to lead us to happiness. Above all, his supernatural communications are designed to promote this object. He has sent his Son to bless mankind, by turning them away from their iniquities. For this purpose did Jesus Christ and his Apostles describe piety and holiness in all their charms. For this purpose did they declare, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things, which God had prepared for them who love him. The design of all our Saviour's precepts was to give rest to our souls ; to communicate to us peace, and comfort, and joy in the holy Spirit. In a word, all the commands and all the promises of God respect this end.

But God employs other means and motives to lead us to virtue, which are his threatenings, or denunciations of punishment, to be inflicted on the sinful. These threat-

enings seem to present his character in another view, as a severe and angry Being: this sentiment however is founded on our misconceptions. For what is implied in the threatenings of the Deity? Do they proceed from any real severity in his nature? No: for he is eternally and unchangeably benevolent: he delights not in the misery, but in the happiness of his creatures. Do they imply that God will punish for the sake of punishing? No: but all his threats amount to these prohibitions: Destroy not yourselves: do yourselves no harm: do not injure and ruin yourselves by your crimes: do not make yourselves wretched. They are not merely denunciations of positive punishment: but they may also be regarded as declarations of the natural and inevitable consequences of sin.

If it is admitted as an established truth, that the purpose of the Almighty in creating man was to confer happiness on him, it must at the same time be allowed, that a particular constitution of mind is necessary to qualify him for this happiness. This constitution in man appears to be holy dispositions and confirmed habits of virtue. It is evident, that as the possession of these qualities produces felicity, so what is contrary to them must produce misery. For opposite causes must of necessity yield opposite effects; and to assert, that man might have been made happy both by obedience and disobedience to the commands of God, is as absurd as to say, that a body, which is impelled in a certain direction by an external force, may at the same time be impelled toward the same point by a force applied in a contrary direction. This argument is conclusive; and thus do different causes act throughout nature. If fire warms, cold must chill us; if virtue makes us happy, vice must render us miserable.

It is in our power to choose either of these causes, either virtue or vice ; in other words we are free agents. Life and death are set before us ; and we are able to make an election between them. Consequently our happiness and misery are of our own procuring. If we choose to be happy, happiness is within our reach, and nothing can frustrate our design : if we choose to be miserable, nothing can prevent our pernicious choice, and when we become so, we can blame none but ourselves.

If this reasoning is just, when God forbids us to commit sin, and threatens us with punishment, if we disregard his prohibition, we may consider him as speaking to us in the following manner : —

Children of men, moved by the principle of benevolence, I have created you and placed you on the earth. I have made you to be happy, and not to promote my own felicity. Your goodness extends not to me ; it is no pleasure nor gain to me, if you are righteous : for infinitely blessed in myself, I stand in no need of your services and praises. I have formed you free, capable of choosing either virtue or vice. Virtue is the source of genuine felicity : and without freedom virtue can have no existence : for the essence of it consists in voluntarily preferring what is right, when it is in your power to practise what is wrong. I command you therefore to be virtuous, because I desire your happiness. I promise you that you shall be blessed, if you obey my will : or I make known to you the natural consequences of obedience. I enjoin it upon you to do yourselves good : I direct you to make yourselves happy here and hereafter. On the contrary I forbid you to sin, because I desire not your death and misery. I

threaten you with punishment, if you disobey my will : or I reveal to you the natural consequences of disobedience. I command you not to destroy yourselves : I forbid you to make yourselves wretched in this world and in the other.

In this view of the threatenings of God, they appear to be proofs of his love, no less than his promises. It is true that they distress the mind of the sinner : but this present distress is designed to prevent still greater misery. They are the chastisements of a father inflicted on his children : they are the salutary warnings of a benevolent parent. He who complains that his heavenly Father is severe, when he threatens him, is like a man, who complains of a friend for warning him not to venture himself on a sea, which is filled with sunken rocks, and on which every vessel that attempts to pass is shipwrecked : Suffer me to proceed : distress not my mind with frightful apprehensions. The breeze is fresh and balmy ; and yonder verdant and beautiful island invites my approach. Let me spread my sail. Acquaint me not with my destruction, till I feel its first inevitable shock ; but permit me, if so it must be, to dash my frail bark in pieces on the rocks below. Similar language is used by the sinner, who is unwilling to be threatened : Terrify me not with denunciations of misery : Tell me not of the consequences of vice. I expect to find gratification in the indulgence of my appetites ; and let me enjoy without gloomy forebodings the pleasure, which they afford. Punishment may possibly come at last : but when it actually arrives, it will then be time enough to feel its pangs.

How foolish is the language of both these persons ? If the man was compelled to cross the dangerous sea,

or the sinner to commit iniquity, by necessity which cannot be counteracted, it might perhaps be wise ; for it is prudent to avoid, not only pain, but the anticipation of pain, when it produces no future good effects. To both these madmen, however, the reply may be made : I mean not, by warning you of your approaching danger, merely to distress your mind ; but to do you good, to prevent the evil, which you have power to shun. Pleasant as it may appear in the deceptive light of temptation, misery and destruction are in the way, which you are pursuing ; and if you persist in it, you will soon find it to be so by fatal experience. I only warn you not to destroy yourself ; not to bring on yourself the ruin, which you can escape, if you choose.

There are sinners, however, who are not satisfied with this reply. They think that God has power to prevent the evil consequences of sin : that he ought to prevent them, if he is infinitely good ; and that though virtue naturally produces happiness, yet that vice ought to produce it too, or, at least, not misery. To what does this presumptuous language amount ? It amounts to this, that God has power, and that he ought to violate the laws, which he has established for the government of the world : that he ought to destroy all connexion between cause and effect ; that he ought to make a state of health to consist in the soundness and regularity of the several parts of the human body, whilst at the same time health is equally preserved by a want of soundness and a total irregularity ; that he ought to make happiness to arise from mental harmony, whilst at the same time it is equally produced by mental discord ; in a word, that he ought to effect contradictions and impossibilities.



If the system of divine Providence in which sin is followed by evil consequences, really exists, it is not absolutely necessary, that we should be able to account for it, or give a reason why it is established. If we should even have in our minds plausible objections against it, they are of little importance : because what is perceived to be true in fact, must remain so, notwithstanding all the difficulties, which may attend our conception of this truth. Or, to express myself in other terms, on the supposition that a system, in which fear and punishment have a place, cannot be fully reconciled with our notions of the goodness of God, and that we can form in our imaginations a more simple and perfect plan, nevertheless every rational man will submit to the truth of things : because he perceives, if he acts in opposition to them, that his theories, however well contrived and apparently consistent, only mislead him. If we should admit therefore, that it is in the power of the Deity, acting as a moral governor, to prevent the evil consequences of sin, the inquiry may still be made, does he do it in fact ? Ought our conduct to be regulated by what may be, and by what we suppose God might do, or ought to do ? Ought it not, on the contrary, to be directed by what is, by what we find that God has done, and believe that he will do ? Do we not every day observe in other men, or experience in ourselves, that sin is punished, or that it produces evil consequences ? If this punishment is wrong, the constitution of nature is wrong ; but can it be altered by us ? If he who sins, injures himself, destroys himself, renders himself miserable, is it not right, is it not benevolent, to warn him not to persist in his wickedness, and not to injure himself any more ?

This act of benevolence is displayed by our heavenly

Father in his prohibitions. When for example he forbids the sin of avarice, his design is to prevent the man, who admits it into his bosom, from extinguishing the kind affections, which are the source of so much satisfaction : and from oppressing his heart with the heavy burden of anxiety : it is because the immoderate pursuit of wealth is not only productive of selfishness and other vices, but also because it deprives him of many comforts, which he voluntarily denies himself, and exposes him to the contempt which his meanness deserves.

Again, when God forbids impiety, it is because it takes a man out of the protection of his maker, and robs him of the pleasure, which a consciousness of the divine approbation affords. It is not only because the love of God is a duty, which he owes to an infinitely benevolent Being, but likewise because it is the most effectual motive to virtue, the most preservative against temptation, the best consolation in affliction. It is because irreligion is dark and gloomy, and destroys every sentiment, which ennobles the heart.

The same observation may be made on every other sin : God prohibits them, not only because they are hateful in themselves, but also because they destroy us.

That they injure us in this world is generally allowed : the same evil consequences, however, must continue, whilst we persist in them, in whatever world we exist. Few will deny, that in the Scriptures future punishment is threatened to the wicked ; and the reason of man cannot object aught against it, if it is properly understood. Some Christians conceive it to be altogether of a positive kind ; but there is another light, in which it may be viewed : it is the natural and inevitable consequence of sin ; and God, in threatening the wicked, may be

said to reveal to them what this consequence is. So that all the denunciations of wrath to come, which the sacred writers express in such awful terms, may amount to this prohibition: Destroy not yourselves: do not by your present conduct prepare for yourselves tribulation in the other world.

If the Scriptures were simply to make known to us, that there is a future state, without saying a word of any punishment in it, this information ought to be sufficient to alarm the wicked. For as virtue only can make us happy, and vice inevitably renders us miserable, in whatever place we exist, — unless we suppose that on entering this mortal state a sinner will be immediately and supernaturally changed, which is not a probable supposition. — he must infallibly continue wretched, till his vicious habits are corrected, and his moral character reformed.

As God is the author of everything which exists, the evil consequences of sin will be inflicted by him. The view, therefore, which we have thus taken of his threatenings and punishments, is not inconsistent with the common system, that they are positive denunciations and positive inflictions: nor does the language, which we have used, contradict the language employed by others. We say with them, that God threatens the wicked with punishment, and inflicts it, when they do not reform. It is the general opinion of Christians, with whom we coincide, that man is a being, in whose soul fear, as well as hope, has a place; and that it is proper to address his fear in order to preserve him from sin, or to reclaim him to holiness. There are Christians, who deny the truth of this opinion, and who assert, that fear ought

not to be made a religious principle. As connected with this assertion, they maintain that punishment has no tendency to reform them, who suffer it; on the contrary, that it drives men to despair; that it is nothing but mercy, which can touch the human heart; and that gratitude is the only motive, which can produce actions essentially good. There is something so pleasing in this system, and so flattering to human nature, that many persons adopt it, as soon as it is proposed.

The system however, like many other ingenious hypotheses, is inconsistent with fact and the sacred Scriptures. In the Scriptures, the Almighty is so far from following the rules, which some men would prescribe to him, that he has threatened, as well as promised; there are denunciations of wrath, as well as offers of mercy: and if we attend to facts, we perceive, that crimes are accompanied with forebodings of pain; and that, when they are committed, pain is actually inflicted; by which punishment many sinners are deterred from committing such crimes in future.

There are religious systems, which vilify mankind; but the system, that God governs his subjects entirely by exciting hope and gratitude, goes into the other extreme, and exalts the species too highly. The truth is, that men are an noble order of beings; but they are not so noble, as to be superior to the influence of fear. Motives perfectly refined are above the comprehensions of many: in numerous respects they resemble children; and like them, when they stray, they must sometimes be chastised again into good behaviour. Thus have the wisest of men thought and written. Thus in particular have the authors of the sacred books conceived. Thus did God deal in ancient times with his peculiar people, the

Jews : when they disobeyed his laws, he visited them with famine, pestilence, the sword, and captivity. Thus does he still deal with the world : in his dispensations with mankind, there are fear and punishment, as well as hope and reward.

Do not fear and punishment produce good effects ? do they not restrain men from committing sin ? Can it be denied, that many are kept within the bounds of temperance and chastity by the apprehension of the wretchedness and degradation, which follow an indulgence in the contrary vices ? Does not the fear of censure preserve many from rash speeches, and that imprudence of behaviour, which sports on the brink of vice ? Can it be denied, that the penalties inflicted by courts of justice terrify multitudes, and prevent them from becoming thieves, when otherwise they would not be scrupulous in making a free use of the property of their neighbor ? Bad as some men are, would they not be worse, if they believed that they could commit crimes with impunity, and if all fear of punishment was removed from their minds ? If these causes then operate thus effectually with respect to the present world, why should they not operate with respect to the other world ? If men are made honest, discreet, temperate, and chaste, by these motives, why should they not by them be deterred from profaneness and impiety ? If God has declared, that nothing, which defileth, can enter the heavenly city, may not men be rationally influenced by the declaration to avoid the sins, which would corrupt their souls ?

In answer to these questions, it may be objected, that motives of this kind cannot change the heart, and that their utmost effect will be to produce actions externally decent ; that although such actions may be useful to

society, and may be valuable in the eyes of the world, yet that they are mere hypocrisy, and can never be pleasing to God ; because he looketh not on the outward appearance, but on the heart : and hath respect, not to the deed itself, but to the principle from which it flows.

The reply to this objection will, I conceive, throw light on the subject, and determine what influence the fear of punishment has in religion. The chief design of threatenings, which excite such fear, appears to be to awaken attention, and to lead men to serious reflection. When by the practice of vice they have deadened their moral feelings, are not touched by generous motives, and have become deaf to the gentle calls of Heaven, the sound of thunder assails their ears. As they cannot be persuaded to abandon the paths of destruction, they must be snatched from them with violence. Infatuated by temptation, they wish to persevere in sin ; and they even lament that it is not always attended with joy. But the terrible consequences of sin are, by a divine threatening, displayed in such vivid colors, that they perceive it would be destructive to commit it any longer. They turn back with reluctance. With aversion they enter the confines of virtue. They view her as a severe mistress ; and hope, that it will once more be in their power to indulge their guilty passions. But as they proceed, they find that temptation had given them a false representation of virtue ; and they see that her ways are pleasant, and her paths tranquil. Vice, as they retire further from her tyrannical dominion, becomes in their sight, at first, less desirable, and at last detestable. The just being, who, in consequence of his denunciations of punishment, appeared to them, whilst they were in misty

regions of sin, as a hard master, is, by the pure and heavenly light, which they now enjoy, contemplated as an indulgent parent; and though they entered into the course of religion from what has been termed a servile principle of fear, yet they soon learn to persist in it from higher motives.

An attention to the power of habit will confirm the truth of this representation. Habits are of two kinds, bad and good. Bad habits become every day more inveterate, and more difficult to be removed; but time is so far from rendering them agreeable, that he, who is subjected to their tyranny, is continually plunging himself more deeply in wretchedness. Good habits have a contrary effect; for it is evident, that by means of this part of human nature, actions which were at first laborious, and even disgusting, provided they are good and useful, become in time tolerable, and at last pleasant. We daily observe instances of men, who began a course of life, which was irksome to them, and who are now, by long use, not only reconciled, but warmly attached to it. If this effect follows the continued practice of other good things, it is in particular the result of the practice of religion; of which we may with truth affirm, that it becomes more and more easy, constant, and delightful by habit, whether a man is led to it at first by force or persuasion.

It is evident, from the observations which have been made, that fear of punishment alone will not be sufficient to guide us through the whole course of virtue. No; it is necessary that other motives should step in to its assistance; if we would become complete in holiness, it is necessary that we should feel the influence of love and gratitude. But a man, who enters on the practice of



religion, by whatever just cause he may first be brought into it, will find other motives springing up and increasing in his heart. When he learns by experience, that the denunciations of wrath, which at first appeared to him to proceed from harshness, were in reality produced by mercy, affection toward his heavenly Father will arise in him. This affection will by degrees increase in his soul ; till at length, having obtained entire possession of it, perfect love will cast out fear. In a word, the fear of punishment cannot be deemed a complete instructor in religion ; but it may be justly considered in the same view, in which St. Paul exhibits the law of Moses, as a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.

Thus it appears, that the fear of punishment is adapted to reform men : and that the Supreme Being is wise and merciful in displaying his terrors, as well as his mercies, to their view. The same observation may be made on punishment itself ; for the arguments which have been alleged, apply as forcibly, and even with more strength, to punishment, than to the fear of punishment : because if only an apprehension of evil is sufficient to induce the wicked to forsake their sins, the actual suffering of evil must more effectually answer the purpose. To render this argument conclusive, we must, I confess, suppose, that as God does not threaten sinners, merely to terrify them, so neither does he punish them for the sake of punishment. The Scriptures however justify us in making this supposition : for both in the Old and in the New Testament it is declared, that whom the Lord loveth he correcteth ; even as a father, the son in whom he delighteth. It is evident that punishment is often, if not generally, disciplinary, and is intended for the benefit of him, by whom it is endured : and it is probable, that whilst the sin-



ner retains his free agency, and till he has acquired such an inveterate habit of wickedness, that it is morally impossible to reform him, it must be in his power to repent and to turn to God.

The conclusion from the subject is, that our heavenly Father has in mercy excited our fear, by threatening us with punishment, or by making known to us the consequences of sin, in the present, and in the future state. It follows therefore, that he is not less benevolent, not less an object of love, when he arrays himself with terror, than when he publishes good tidings of great joy. In all his dispensations he is infinitely good. He is good, when he promises, he is good, when he rewards us; he is good, when he threatens, he is good, when he punishes us. His character is uniform; it appears amiable and adorable in every view; and it should influence us to fear and serve him with reverence and grateful devotion.

2d. S. after Easter.

# SERMON XXI.

## CONTENT.

---

### PSALMS XXIII. 1, 2.

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD; I SHALL NOT WANT. HE  
MAKETH ME TO LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES; HE LEAD-  
ETH ME BESIDE THE STILL WATERS.

IN this passage we have a pleasing picture of a life of content. — By content I mean a moderate degree of happiness, that happiness, which leaves the mind satisfied without producing rapture; where under the protection of God, the kind shepherd, there is no want of any necessary comfort; but we are led to repose on pastures of tender grass, and drink the healthful waters of a brook, which flows quietly at our feet. This content is in general all, which we can expect to obtain in the present world. We may esteem ourselves favored, if we can pass along without having cause to complain. If our minds are gently stirred with pleasant emotions, it is all that we can hope, and all that we ought to desire; for on earth there are few causes of ecstatic pleasure. Sometimes perhaps the man of taste may feel it, on the view of an exquisite production of art or the imagination; but this sensation passes away in a moment; and it is seldom excited more than once by the same object.

In pursuit of the high degrees of happiness, we are commonly disappointed ; and we not only miss the pleasure, which we aimed at, but we find that mortification has taken its place. We should learn then to moderate our desires, and to be satisfied with lower degrees of happiness, which will compensate us for their want of intenseness by their duration.

It is in a great measure in our power to acquire such a satisfaction as I have now described ; but for this purpose it is necessary to observe rules of conduct ; for content comes not of itself unsolicited. The gifts of God are bestowed on the meritorious, who are awake, and whose minds are active : they descend not on the idle, who do not seek them : on the vicious, who are unfit for their reception. I purpose in this discourse to offer several rules, by means of which we may hope to obtain a contented mind.

I would previously observe, that there are circumstances and times, in which, though we may be virtuous, it is impossible to be contented. I am not so visionary as to suppose, that any one can be happy, when his body is in pain, when he has suffered an aggravated loss, or experienced a deep mortification. We may, through the influence of religion, be enabled to bear these evils with patience ; and consequently may in some degree lessen them : but after all they do not cease to be evils. They may eventually do us good ; but they are now a bitter cup, which we drink with disgust, and from which we may hope to be delivered. — In particular, I do not suppose, that they who have passed the former part of life in a vicious, or even in an imprudent, manner, can expect to enjoy a large share of content. They may sin-

cerely repent of their follies and crimes ; but repentance, though it obtains forgiveness from God, cannot reverse the laws of nature which he has constituted. He who rashly cuts off one of his hands, may soon be sorry for his folly ; but his sorrow, however sincere and lasting, cannot make him whole. Repentance cannot restore the inheritance, which has been prodigally dissipated ; or the health, which has been wantonly impaired. It cannot remove the pain, which has already been given ; or prevent the scandal, which has already been occasioned. However pious and virtuous a man may be at present, if his conscience compels him to look back on past deeds of vice and impiety, he must necessarily feel the mortification of self-reproach. Perfect content therefore cannot be the portion of them, who have not maintained an uninterrupted course of innocence. In the other world, we hope, the consequences of sin will be completely obliterated ; but in the present state it is always punished.

1. This observation shows the importance of beginning life in a proper manner. Accordingly the first rule, which I would give you, my brethren, for the attainment of a contented mind, is, that you should in youth pursue those objects, which are best adapted to its production. It is well known, that no man can enjoy content, who has lost his health ; who is involved in debt ; who is deprived of his good name ; who is compelled to associate himself with the infamous part of society ; who has no self-command, and is the slave of imperious habits. I say then, if you wish to secure a contented mind, you should in youth avoid the causes, which produce these fatal effects. You should be temperate in the use of pleasure,

that you may preserve the vigor of your constitution ; for health is a blessing, which is necessary to give a relish to all other enjoyments. You should endeavor to store your minds with knowledge ; that when external objects fail, you may possess a fund of entertainment in yourselves. By cautious and upright conduct you should maintain a fair reputation ; and by meekness, candor, and benevolence, you should merit the esteem of your fellow men, and gain their confidence. You should, in particular, look forward to manhood and old age ; and not by an immoderate indulgence, exhaust those sources of satisfaction, which, temperately used, would last through life. In a word, if you desire to obtain content, you must be good in your youth. To this point the exhortations of preachers, on this and on every other subject, tend. Whatever may be our theme, and however large a field of remark we may undertake to pass over, this is the centre, to which we are brought at last : for goodness, or virtue, or holiness, or, as Solomon expresses it, the fear of God and the keeping of his commandments, — is the whole duty, business and happiness of man.

2. It is expedient to be more particular : I therefore give as a second rule, or observation, that constant industry is one of the most abundant sources of content. Industry at first view has a forbidding aspect : for every man, not only wishes for rest and ease, but it is generally the object of his labors. He hopes, after all his toils, to repose at last ; to retire from noise and tumult ; and in the company of a few select friends, to enjoy himself, without having any business to pursue, or any cares to distract his mind. But this very rest, to which he aspires, is, except in extreme old age, one of the

greatest evils, which can be inflicted on him. Listen, my brethren, to them, who have quitted the world and its bustle, and who, as they say, have nothing to do but to rest; and you will be convinced by the discordant sounds, which they utter, that content is a stranger to their breasts. Observe them: their faces are gloomy; their actions are spiritless; they complain of their disordered nerves, of their blunted senses, of the languor and insipidity of their lives: they have too much time for anxious thoughts; and it is their general employment to brood over their imaginary woes. On the other hand, look at the industrious: what cheerfulness is there in their countenances; what spirit, in their actions; with what celerity do they move; and how keen is their relish for every enjoyment! They have not leisure to complain: nor time to discover, that they have any causes of uneasiness. You may say that they are not perfectly happy; but you cannot say, that they are miserable. The truth is, that they experience a satisfaction, which they cannot stop to analyze, and which is not so striking, as always to excite attention; but which is not, on that account the less real and constant.

Such being the good effects of industry, you ought, my brethren, to cultivate an early acquaintance with it, and to regard it as your best friend. It is necessary that the habit should be formed in youth; for if you are idle in the first part of life, you cannot afterward easily become active. If you give way to indolence for a few years, you will find it almost impossible to make an exertion. Some of you have experienced this listlessness; and you have seen, after a long discontinuance of any practice, how hard it was to do what you once thought the easiest thing imaginable. Follow industry

then as the source of a contented mind. On the other advantages attending it I do not expatiate. I only say in a word, that industry preserves health : that industry gains riches : that industry acquires knowledge ; and that industry renders a man eminent in his station.

3. A third rule, which I give for the acquisition of a contented mind, is, that you should make a judicious choice of your profession in life. Many men are uneasy and dissatisfied, because they are out of place : they have no talents nor relish for the business, which they follow. God has bestowed his gifts with so much impartiality and bounty on his creatures, that whilst no man has received them all, to almost every man has been imparted sufficient to qualify him for a particular employment. There is a station, in which, if he cannot become distinguished, he can at least be made useful ; whilst in other situations he is embarrassed and unskilful. Feeling that he is destitute of the talents requisite for the business, which he follows, and unable to execute the duties of it to his own satisfaction, his mind is discontented, and his exertions are feeble and interrupted. It may be asked, what remedy there is for this evil, when he has been long engaged in an employment ? I answer, that in general there is none ; for it is commonly impracticable to change a profession. The unfortunate man must endeavor to accommodate his mind to his situation ; and be satisfied with performing, as well as he can, what he cannot perform in the best manner. I do not pretend to make them contented, who are already uneasy : the evil, when it exists, cannot be entirely cured ; but in the beginning it might have been prevented. You ought therefore, as far as depends on yourselves, to make use

of your utmost care and discretion in the choice of your employment. You should study your own disposition and talents ; and not rashly venture on a profession, in which you cannot be either useful or happy. I am sensible, that in this affair much depends on your parents ; and that without consulting your inclinations, they sometimes choose for you professions, which correspond with their own interested or ambitious notions. They must answer for it, when you become useless and wretched by their means : but allowing, that they are highly to be blamed, is it not true, that your own pride and rashness are frequently the causes of your entering on employments, where you reap an abundant harvest of chagrin and discontent ?

4. Another source of uneasiness of mind is an irritable temper. Accordingly, a fourth rule, which I give is, cultivate a mild and placable disposition. Good temper is in some degree the gift of nature : there are men, who are formed of soft and kind materials ; but others, whose minds seem to be composed of sour and bitter stuff, should not despair : they should endeavor to acquire by religion what was not originally given. They may plead, that it is difficult to subdue the natural fierceness of their tempers : be it so ; but until they obtain this command of themselves, they cannot enjoy content.

5. A fifth rule, which I give is, that you ought not, my brethren, to yield to your passions : I do not mean now your angry passions, but your passions of another kind. On this head it would not be proper to enlarge : I would observe however, that the principal reason why many young men are not more contented, and why they wear such a haggard look of vexation on their faces, is,



that they have fancied there is pleasure where there is none ; and instead of being governed by prudence and moderation, they have chosen to give the reins to their unruly passions. In youth we should expect to find the most abundant share of happiness : for every object has then the charm of novelty : and the heart is warm and disposed to friendship. But many young men, smothering that spirit of curiosity, which should animate their hearts, and which would find ample gratification in the innumerable wonders, that nature and art present them on every side, give themselves up to idleness and dissipation, to a repetition of the same tasteless joys and unsatisfactory pleasures, in which there is nothing new to elevate or delight them. At the same time avoiding the society of virtuous young men, who possess either brilliancy of imagination, extensive science, or profundity of thought, and by whom their knowledge would be enlarged, and their understandings enlightened and improved, — they engage in scandalous connexions, by which their taste is depraved and their morals corrupted. To sympathy and affection they are strangers ; for the feast of reason and fancy they have no relish ; but the only tie, which unites them with their companions, is a participation in the same intemperate mirth, and the same intoxicating draughts of pleasure. They are discontented ; I may use a stronger term : they are wretched. Who can wonder ? It is not in such scenes, and by such objects, that content is to be obtained.

6. Another rule, which I give is, to seek content in the cultivation of friendship. I need not use arguments to prove, that content is unknown to the man, who believes that no one loves him. I have no doubt my hear-

ers, that most of you make a great part of your felicity consist in the society and affection of them, whom you regard. Friendship is the favorite theme of all, who possess feeling hearts. The value of the blessing is acknowledged ; but it is not always pursued. I would therefore say, that he who hopes for friendship, must not satisfy himself with celebrating its worth : he must secure it by his own exertions. The rule here is simple and obvious : If you would obtain friends, you must be friendly. You must treat them, whose regard you wish to conciliate, with affection and confidence. You must enter into their joys ; you must participate in their sorrows. You must endure their infirmities ; you must assist them in distress. You must manifest, and you must feel, pleasure in their company. Such friendship as this is generally confined to a few. He, who hopes for the fulness of content, must commonly move in a small circle. The society of the individuals of a small number of families will be sufficient to satisfy his heart. When he extends himself beyond this limit, the fervor of affection will be proportionably diminished. For friendship will be substituted ceremony and parade. Visits which are brilliant, and perfectly civil, but at the same time cold, and somewhat tedious, will take place of those conversations, which are lively and heart-felt. To the world, and decorum, as it is called, it is true, sacrifices must be made ; but let us not sacrifice all our happiness. Let us have some friends, in whose bosoms we can be at home ; to whom we can speak without art or distrust, without the fiction of flattery, or the flourish of unmeaning compliment. These pleasures are principally to be found in the society of parents, brothers, and sisters, and sometimes of what may be justly styled a still dearer name. Content would

always be found in the latter connexion, if the young in the choice of a companion for life, did not too frequently conduct themselves injudiciously. Truth however compels me to say, that not a few of the discontents of human beings arise from what ought to be the source of perpetual satisfaction. I have shown the importance of making choice of a suitable profession; but this choice is of still greater moment. If it is not made with discretion, the consequence will be, that in a house, which ought to be the abode of peace and harmony, will be heard the voice of loud complaint and mutual reproach. To you therefore, my young friends, who are still free to choose and to reject, I would recommend to exercise caution, and to consult your reason. If it is not in your power, as it may not always be, to discover a person agreeable to your taste, and who would render you happy, consent to pass through life in a single state. The matrimonial connexion was undoubtedly intended by Heaven as a blessing to mankind: it is not however absolutely essential to happiness; and incomparably better is the situation of that person, who is alone, than of the person, who is yoked with a fool, a drunkard, or a tyrant.

7. I would give only one more rule, which is, that you should cultivate religion, which, when all other means fail, diffuses peace and satisfaction into the mind. I have observed before, that virtue is necessary to produce content. Religion includes virtue; but at present I use the term in a sacred sense. By it I mean that love of God, which arises from a sense of his goodness, and a contemplation of his perfections and works. When you study the nature of God, and the universe which he has created, you perceive so many marks of benevolence,

that you conclude, that he is a wise and gracious Being, who has formed a perfect plan, the object of which is the happiness of his creatures. As you become convinced, that everything which he does is right, and will terminate in perfection, you are disposed to acquiesce, whatever uneasiness you may personally suffer ; believing that evil is accidental, whilst good is essential and eternal. Such a belief taught the Apostle Paul to be content, in whatever condition he was placed. He passed through many labors and sufferings ; but his soul was animated by religion, which enabled him to endure them with patience, and even with cheerfulness. Under all his trials and afflictions he beheld the hand of God ; and he knew, that what God did could not be wrong. I exhort you, my brethren, to imitate his spirit ; and like him, to look forward to a future world. In the present scene you cannot expect perfect happiness ; for it is a first state, and is intended to discipline you in virtue. Whatever causes of uneasiness remain therefore, after you have endeavored by every proper means to obtain content, you should submit to with resignation ; as you have reason to believe, that they will be of short duration ; and that beyond the grave, what is now wanting to complete happiness will be supplied, what is rough will be made smooth, and what is obscure will be illuminated.

2d S. after Easter.

## SERMON XXII.

CHRISTIANITY BEGAN IN THE EARLY PART OF THE FIRST CENTURY.

---

ACTS X. 37.

THAT WORD (I SAY) YOU KNOW, WHICH WAS PUBLISHED THROUGHOUT ALL JUDEA, AND BEGAN FROM GALILEE, AFTER THE BAPTISM WHICH JOHN PREACHED.

WHITSUNDAY, the day which we now observe, is one of the three great festivals of the year : and its design is to commemorate the effusion of the holy Spirit on the primitive disciples. By this event they were qualified to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, to extend it beyond the limits of Judea, within which it had been hitherto confined. The subjects proper to be treated on these occasions, relate to the Christian religion, and particularly to its commencement and progress. The text asserts that the gospel began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached ; that is, in the year twenty-seven of the Christian era. This date is properly the origin of the religion ; for before that period our Saviour had lived in retirement at Nazareth, and had not appeared before the eyes of the public. About eighteen hundred years ago, then, the religion commenced ; and no fact is more certain than that it is of great antiquity. This

can be demonstrated by a chain of events, which can be traced back, without one broken link, to the beginning of the second century. We have received this religion from our fathers; who have committed to us the Scriptures, which they received from their fathers: and our ancestors did not invent these books; but they were handed down to them by the disciples who preceded them. Though the world has suffered many revolutions during the past seventeen hundred years; yet the Scriptures, through the whole of the period, have never been lost: nor has any one pretended, in any part of this series of time, that the religion was lately introduced, that the writings, which contain it, had just been brought to light. These facts are known to all, who are acquainted with ecclesiastical history.

There is no doubt, nor does the most prejudiced infidel deny, that the Christian religion existed in the age of Trajan; that there was then a numerous body of its disciples in several parts of the Roman empire. Among other proofs of this point is the celebrated epistle of the younger Pliny to that emperor, written not long after the commencement of the second century. From this epistle, the authenticity of which cannot be questioned, it appears that there was then a great number of Christians in Asia Minor; that consequently the religion had then begun to exist: and consequently that its author, or authors, must have lived at least several years before that period.

As these two conclusions are nearly self-evident, it requires not many words to prove, that they are justly drawn. It will be sufficient to say, that effects cannot take place without a cause. So great a number of persons, in every part of the Roman empire, could not have

become Christians, unless Christ had existed, or at least, unless his history had been written, several years before. Instead of *several* years, we have a right to say *many* years ; because all, who are acquainted with human nature, know that great changes in the opinions of men do not suddenly take place. Pliny wrote his letter in Bithynia ; and he informs the emperor, that the contagion of this superstition, as he styles the Christian religion, had pervaded, not the great cities only, but even villages and the country, so that the temples of the Gods had become nearly desolate. Now to have spread the religion from Jerusalem to Bithynia, and to have gained so great a number of converts must have required a length of time. The conclusion therefore is just, that the author of Christianity lived before the second century.

In what part of the first century the Christian religion began, ought to be the subject of dispute between those who believe, and those who dis-believe it. I say, this ought to be the subject of dispute, not that it always is. For there are infidels, who allow that Jesus was born at the commencement of the first century ; that he and his followers made many disciples and that the books of the New Testament are as ancient as his friends pretend ; and yet there is no truth in his religion ; that Jesus himself was an impostor ; that he neither worked miracles, nor arose from the dead ; and that his disciples were either deceived by him, or his abettors in the fraud. In a word, they affirm, that the most pious and virtuous of men, — for that such was the character of Jesus Christ, they are compelled to acknowledge, — was a hypocrite and deceiver ; and that his disciples, if not fools, were artful men, though it is not pretended that they obtained any advantage by their art.

If these assertions had not been often confuted, I might stop to demonstrate their fallacy and absurdity ; but I may safely leave them with you, not apprehending that you are in danger of being infected with their poison, as there are antidotes at hand to preserve your minds from injury.

That they cannot with reason be maintained, is now confessed by several unbelievers. They have therefore taken other ground : There was never such a person as Jesus Christ, say they : the actions attributed to him did not take place : the Christian religion began, not at the time which is pretended, but at a later period ; before the reign of Trajan, we acknowledge, but not long before : the books of the New Testament are forgeries, not of those who are styled apostles, for no such persons ever existed, but of writers at the close of the first century, and whose names are now unknown.

The dispute then between Christians and this class of infidels is, at what time did the religion commence ? Was it about the year thirty, when Jesus began to teach, as believers maintain ? or was it at the close of the century, as these unbelievers assert ?

That the Christian religion commenced at the first of these periods has been demonstrated by several authors ; among others by Paley, whose popular book is in many hands ; and most fully by Lardner, in his *Credibility of the Gospel History*, and in his *Jewish and Heathen Testimonies*. The latter author in particular has produced several writers, living in the first century, and testifying to the existence of the Christian religion. Unless therefore the books which he quotes, are also forged, as well as those of the New Testament, the Christian religion



must have commenced before the age of Trajan, and at least as early as the reign of Nero.

Now against this argument it is objected, that a great number of the writers of that age do not mention the Christian religion, or take notice of its disciples. As this objection may appear of weight to those, who have not examined it, I purpose to attend to it in this discourse. Acknowledging the fact, I will endeavor to account for it. It is probable that I shall not do justice to the subject : but I reflect that I am addressing the wise ; and I hope that the hints, which I shall offer, will induce them to give the question a more thorough examination

From the year twenty-seven of the Christian era, at which time our Saviour was baptised by John, to the year one hundred and seventeen, the end of the reign of Trajan is a period of ninety years. Though the Augustan age was passed, and learning, it is generally supposed, was beginning to decline ; yet eloquence, poetry, history, and philosophy were still cultivated with success. Authors were numerous ; and several of the most valuable works of antiquity were produced within that period. But the depredations of time have never been more fatally exercised than upon that age. The authors, of whom any works remain, amount to no more than forty-four. Of many of them we have nothing but fragments : the rest are irrecoverably lost. When we consider that Europe produces at present, in a single month, as many authors as remain of the whole of that long period of ninety years, we ought not to be surprised at the darkness which hangs on it. The history of that age is indeed very obscure. It resembles a manuscript, of which

the greatest part is obliterated, and the contents of which we can only conjecture from the few words, that are still legible.

Happily however for the Christian, the writers of the New Testament and the Apostolical Fathers are included in this number of authors. The writers of the New Testament, whose works through the providence of God are handed down to us entire, and probably more correct than any other books of the same antiquity, are eight; and if the Epistle to the Hebrews was not written by St Paul, and the Revelation was not written by St John the Evangelist, which is the opinion of several judicious critics, they are ten in number. The Apostolical Fathers [I.] are five in number; and if we include Papias, of whom we have fragments only, there are six. These fifteen authors, — not sixteen, for the author of the epistle to Hebrews, if not St Paul, is supposed to be St Luke, or one of the Apostolical fathers, and therefore should not be counted twice, — these fifteen authors constitute a large proportion of the forty-four before mentioned; and they all bear testimony to the existence of the Christian religion. If we could go no further than this, if no notice whatever was taken of the Christians by any of the twenty-nine remaining authors, I would ask, whether we have not enough to satisfy the mind of any reasonable man?

Should it be objected, that I in part beg the question, because we have no proof that the authors of the New Testament wrote at so early a period as I have supposed, I answer, that we have the same proof that St Paul, — for I take him for an example, — wrote in the reign of Nero, as we have that Pliny wrote in the reign of Tra-

jan. This proof is derived from the internal character of his compositions, which suit no other age than that, in which we say they were actually produced : and from the testimony of succeeding authors, who quote his epistles, and attribute them to him.

Of the twenty-nine other authors, two only were Jews : the rest were heathen. It is not pretended that any of them believed the Christian religion. We can therefore expect little or nothing relating to it in their works. If they had been so much interested in it, as to think it worthy of examination, it is probable they would have believed it. It is evident, however, that it did not engage their attention. But it should be remembered, that though Christianity had kindled a spark, which was spreading gradually amidst the foundations of the temple of idolatry ; yet that the fire was not visible, that the superstructure itself was not yet involved in flames : Or, to use the more correct comparison of our Saviour, that the gospel resembled the least of all seeds in the beginning, and that it had not yet grown into so large a tree, as to afford shelter in its branches to the birds of the air.

These general observations are sufficient to impair the objection, which I am considering. By dividing these writers into classes, and examining the nature of their works particularly, its strength will be still further weakened.

The first of the Jewish writers, to whom I have referred, is Philo. It is asserted by Cave, that being sent on an embassy to Rome, he conversed with the Apostle Peter and cultivated his friendship, that he was initiated

into the Christian religion and that he afterwards relapsed.\* But Cave is a credulous writer; and like other authors of excessive credulity, by attempting to prove too much, he has injured the cause, which he meant to support. The name of Philo is not mentioned, nor his testimony alleged, by the judicious Lardner. Though Bellarmin supposes, that he has written in praise of the Christians, who lived in Egypt under the Evangelist Mark;† yet the truth is that he does not mention either St Mark or the Egyptian Christians. For this silence we can easily account. Philo was a Jew, of Alexandria, and a Platonic philosopher. Living at a distance from Jerusalem, and writing on subjects unconnected with the gospel, he was not led to treat of the affairs of the Christians. To this observation may be added what is highly probable, though not absolutely certain, that his works were composed when our Saviour was only eight or ten years old,‡ that is, before the preaching of the gospel began.

The other Jewish writer is\* Josephus. His testimony is produced by Lardner, who has treated it at large, pointed out its value, and considered the difficulties which attend it. To him therefore I refer you.

The twenty-seven heathen writers may be divided into four classes: poets, miscellaneous authors, philosophers, and historians.

I begin with the poets, and the first on the list is Phædrus. He is placed in the reign of Tiberius, though

\* Guil. Cave in Chartoph. Ecclesiast. See Blount's Censura, p. 72.

† Bellarmin. de Scriptor. Ecclesiast. p. 36. Coloniae. 1613.

‡ Encyclopedie. x. 350. Lausanne. 1782.

no one can certainly determine when he flourished. A small volume of Fables in Iambic verse is all that he has left : and, as might be expected, they contain no allusions to the Christians. This is not more wonderful than that we cannot find in Gay or La Fontaine any reference to innumerable events which took place in the age in which they wrote. As it is probable that he had completed his Fables before the preaching of the gospel began, I should not take notice of him, was it not in my power to make an important use of him in favor of my argument. The name of Phædrus is not mentioned by any ancient writer except Martial and Avienus. It is doubtful whether Martial does not intend another person : and as to Avienus, his testimony comes rather late : as he flourished more than three hundred years after the reign of Tiberius. Seneca even says, that no Roman author had ever composed fables after the manner of Æsop. When therefore these Fables were first brought to light and published, which was not till the close of the sixteenth century, the work was believed by several of the learned to be supposititious. But this doubt entirely vanished, as soon as the book was carefully examined ; for it was then perceived by every person qualified to judge, that the style belonged to the age of Augustus or Tiberius.\* That is, notwithstanding strong external evidence to the contrary, every man, who has a competent knowledge of the Latin language, believes, from internal evidence alone, that Phædrus wrote not long after the first century commenced ; and he would smile on any one who should affirm, that these Fables were not composed till the second century ; for he plainly per-

\* Dictionnaire de Bayle. Article *Phedre*.

ceives that this is impossible. Now the internal evidence, arising from the very peculiar style of the New Testament, is still more convincing. It alone proves that it is the production of the first century ; as Michaelis has demonstrated ; to whose Introduction to the New Testament† I refer you for the proofs at large, not choosing to take up your time with repeating what you can read at your leisure.

I pass to other poets. It is not to be expected, that the *Pharsalia* of Lucan, the subject of which is the war between Pompey and Caesar ; that the poem of Silius Italicus on the second Punic War ; that the eight imperfect books of Valerius Flaccus on the Argonautic Expedition ; or that the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* of Statius should contain anything relating to Christianity.

Persius, who flourished in the reign of Nero, has left six Satires, in which he inveighs against the emperor and the depravity of the age. Petronius Arbiter, who lived at the same time, has also described, in prose and in verse, but in a lighter style, the corrupt manners of Nero and his court. Of Juvenal, who lived about the time of Domitian, there are extant fifteen Satires, filled with the most poignant invectives against the vices of the Romans. Martial, a poet of the same age, composed a great number of Epigrams, few of which exceed eight lines. Can anything relating to the Christians be looked for in such works as they wrote ? We find however here more than we have a right to demand ; for both Martial and Juvenal allude to the sufferings of the Christians under Nero : accordingly their testimony is alleged by Lardner. In the two other satirists, it is confessed,

† Marsh's Michaelis. i. 45.

we discover nothing to the purpose. These are all the poets of that age, of whom we have any works remaining.

The second class of authors I have styled miscellaneous. These writers differ from each other in their subjects: but it is convenient to place them under one head. From none of them, except Dio Chrysostom and Galen, can testimonies in favor of the existence of a body of Christians be deduced: but when I recall to your recollection the subjects on which they wrote, this will not appear surprising.

The elder Seneca, the first of these authors in the order of time, and who is frequently confounded with his son, the philosopher, was a rhetorician: and he has left a few Declamations, not composed by him, but compiled from other authors.

Of Pomponius Mela, the second of these authors, there is extant a concise work on Geography, in which he treats, not the religion of nations but the local situation of the several countries then known.

Columella, the third author, composed twelve books on Agriculture.

Of Quintillian, the fourth author, we have twelve books on Oratory, beside a number of Declamations.

Julius Frontinus, the fifth author, wrote a treatise on Aqueducts, and several books on War Stratagems.

Of Dio Chrysostom, the sixth author, there is extant a great number of Orations and Dissertations on political, moral, and philosophical subjects. He is the first writer of this class, who alludes to the Christians.

Galen, the last of this class, began to flourish in the age of Trajan. There are in his works two remarkable

passages, in which he speaks of the Christians in express terms.

The third class of authors consists of the philosophers. It contains the younger Seneca, Epictetus, and the elder Pliny, whom I place, in this class, though perhaps he belongs to the second. These are the authors, who occasion the most difficulty to Christians; and they are those, in whose silence infidels the most triumph. The philosophers, says a celebrated opponent,\* overlooked or rejected the Christian system. To the objection arising from their silence both Bishop Watson and Lardner have written convincing answers. Without taking up your time in repeating arguments, which you can read to most advantage in their own words, I will only add a few observations to what they have suggested.

As the Christians were so numerous in Rome, as to excite the attention of the emperor Nero, it is probable that Seneca, the first of these philosophers, had heard of them. It is confessed however that he makes no mention of them in his works. But this appears no more unaccountable, than that other moral writers should not describe sects, which have sprung up, and even made great progress, in the age in which they lived. Still it may be supposed that Seneca would be disposed to borrow from writings, which contain such an excellent system of morality as the four Gospels. But to this it may be answered that he could not easily do it; for though a body of Christians existed, yet their books probably were not published till after he had composed his works. The Gospel of St Matthew, the first in order, according

\* Gibbon's Rom. Hist. chap. xv.



to the judgment of the best critics, was not written till the year sixty-four, and Seneca was put to death the year after.

With regard to Epictetus, two passages quoted from his works by Lardner refer to the Christians. That he has said no more of them, may be imputed to his ignorance of Christianity, or with Gibbon to his contempt, or to any other cause, which may be thought proper: but the neglect, with which he treats the Christians, does not prove that they had no existence, when he wrote.

As to the elder Pliny, it would not be easy, after the most careful perusal, to discover a place in his voluminous work, in which the author would, by his subjects, be led to speak of Christianity; [II.] for it is altogether a work, not of civil or religious, but of natural, history. In one book, for example, he treats of beasts, in another of birds, in another of fishes, in another of minerals. The historian before alluded to says, that Pliny takes no notice of the supernatural darkness at the death of our Saviour, though a distinct chapter in him is designed for eclipses of an extraordinary nature and unusual duration; and he refers to the thirtieth chapter of the second book. But let any man read this thirtieth chapter, and he will not perceive, that it was the design of Pliny to treat in it of all the remarkable obscurations of the sun, which had ever happened. For as the whole chapter does not exceed twenty words, it may be concluded, that it was the intention of the author to speak of only one remarkable eclipse, by way of example; and consequently that he might omit to mention, even if he had heard of it, the supernatural darkness at the death of Christ. [III.]

I proceed to the fourth class of heathen authors, the historians. In them at least we may expect to find something respecting Christianity: and the truth is, that all of them, who wrote concerning the age in which the Christians lived, do mention them particularly. The historians, who testify to their existence, are three in number, Tacitus, Suetonius, and the younger Pliny. whose Epistles may be styled historical compositions. The value of their testimony has been so often considered, that I need not expatiate on it; and indeed it is not the design of this discourse to enlarge on the subject. The other historians of that age are silent on the head of Christianity; and for this we must account.

Of Valerius Maximus, who flourished in the reign of Tiberius, we have nine books of Memorable Sayings and Actions, which are probably not an original work, but an abridgment made in a later age. He lived too early in the period to have an opportunity to become acquainted with the Christians.

Velleius Paterculus wrote a history of Greece and Rome, of which we have nothing but fragments, and which concludes at the year eight, before our Saviour began to preach.

Some persons suppose that Quintus Curtius flourished at this period; but whether he did or not, is of no importance, as he has left nothing but a history of Alexander the Great, who lived more than three centuries before Christ.

Florus is also by many placed in the age of Trajan. We have of him an Epitome of the Roman History which descends no lower than the beginning of the reign of Augustus, and consequently does not relate to the period, which we are considering.

Last in the catalogue is the renowned Plutarch, who has left various works on morals, politics, and history, or rather biography. His biography does not come so low as the commencement of the first century. Theodoret says of him, that he had heard of our holy gospel, and inserted many of our sacred mysteries in his works; but that part of his works, from which Theodoret might collect these passages, is not now extant. Dryden, who believes that he has neglected to mention the Christians, has made several good observations to account for his silence; and to him I refer you.

I have now mentioned the names of all the heathen authors of this age, which have come to my knowledge. It is possible that a few of obscurer fame and less importance may be overlooked; and it is possible also, though I am not sensible of it, that I may have committed several mistakes, in speaking of those whom I have treated. The result is, that of the whole number of heathen authors, who flourished within this period, eight either speak of the Christians in express terms, or are supposed to allude to them. [IV.]

It is manifest, even from the sketch which I have made, that few historical works are now extant, relating to that age, and written in that age. Of this every modern author, who undertakes to compile a history of the first century, complains. For except Josephus's Jewish Wars, the Characters of the twelve first emperors by Suetonius, — for his short descriptions hardly deserve the name of a history, — the mutilated annals of Tacitus, and the Letters of Pliny, everything has been swept away by the hand of time. This we cannot forbear to

regret; but as Christians we must rejoice, that whilst so many other ancient works have perished, the Gospels have been spared. From them we can learn everything which is necessary respecting the time, the actions, the character, and the doctrines of our Saviour.

In proportion to the years in which he appeared before the eyes of the public, we know a hundred times more of his history than of the history of Trajan, the celebrated emperor, whose reign closes the period within which I confine myself. Trajan passes with reason for the greatest and best prince who ever sat on the throne of the Cæsars. A few emperors equalled him in goodness; and one or two might rival him in war: but no Roman emperor with such extraordinary talents, ever united so many virtues, [V.] and merited at the same time so much admiration and love. Whilst he made his subjects happy with the mildness of his government, he raised the Roman name to the summit of glory. He subdued the Dacians, the Armenians, and the Mesopotamians: He extended his conquering arms even to Assyria, and gave a king to the Parthians. Of these facts we are informed in general; but of the details we know nothing. Though he reigned near twenty years, and his history was written by a number of respectable authors; yet everything concerning him is lost, except the Panegyric of Pliny, the shapeless fragments of the younger Dio, and the scanty abridgments of Eutropius and Aurelius Victor.\*

Ought we to wonder therefore, whilst the actions of this great man are almost buried in oblivion, that so little should be said in the few remaining heathen authors

\* Crevier *Histoire des Empereurs*, vii. 344. 475.

of the founder of our religion? Notwithstanding the acknowledged silence of the greatest number of them, confiding in the testimony of the Evangelists and other primitive witnesses, we may venture to place the introduction of Christianity in the early part of the first century; and on their authority we may not hesitate to believe, that Jesus Christ began to preach and submitted to death in the reign of Tiberius.

I flatter myself, that from the arguments, exceptions, and illustrations, which I have offered, the silence of several ancient authors respecting the Christians will not now appear an insurmountable difficulty. But to remove any doubt, which may still remain in your minds, I will state a case by way of hypothesis. The discovery and settlement of that part of North America, which is possessed by the descendants of the English, commenced in the reigns of queen Elizabeth and king James the First. Hakluyt, Purchas, Smith, and others, fix the date of the several voyages; and on their testimony we rely, without wishing for other authority. I will not undertake to say whether any notice is taken of these voyages by the poets, critics, and philosophers of that age, whose attention was not turned to the subject. But should we not look with astonishment at the man, who was so incredulous as not to believe these facts, which events only have shown to be important, unless he found them confirmed by the writings of every contemporary author; by the epic poem of Tasso, for example, the satires of Donne, the epigrams of Owen, [VI.] the criticisms of Joseph Scaliger, and the philosophical works of Lord Bacon?

Bishop Watson states a still stronger case, which is

not an hypothesis, but a fact. The reformation of religion, which began in Germany in the sixteenth century, is one of the most distinguished events in the history of the world : not only are its effects important ; but, what is remarkable, it commenced with éclat : and yet, says the bishop, historians and philosophers of no mean reputation might be mentioned, who were the contemporaries of Luther and the first reformers, and who have passed over in negligent or contemptuous silence, their daring attempts to shake the stability of St Peter's chair.\*

Enough however has been said to convince the impartial inquirer. The objection arising from the silence of any ancient heathen writer is not so strong, as to destroy the credibility of the Evangelists. The Christian religion commenced at the time which the followers of Jesus have assigned for its origin. With reason therefore may we persevere in considering him as a real character, as the friend of God and man, and no impostor ; his disciples as true men, and the gospel as authentic. Let us endeavor to strengthen our faith ; and whilst we pay all due attention to the objections of infidels, and weigh them without prejudice, let us not suffer our belief to be shaken by ungrounded assertions. If the Christian religion is true, it is of infinite importance to us. We ought not therefore hastily to reject it, or give to the arguments, which establishes its divinity, a heedless attention. But if we believe its truth, we ought to submit to its commands ; for it is a religion less of speculation than of practice. Little will it avail us to call Christ our Lord, whilst we hate his religion in our

\* Watson's Apol. for Christianity. Let. v.

hearts, and disgrace our profession by our vices. Little will it avail us to be Christians in name and external worship, whilst we are not Christians in faith unfeigned, in purity of conversation, in charity to man, and in piety to **God**.

Whitsunday.

## NOTES TO SERMON XXII.

### NOTE [I.] p. 270.

SHOULD it be allowed, that the writings of the Apostolical Fathers have been more or less corrupted, they are still to be considered as competent witnesses to the fact, that Christianity existed long before the reign of Trajan. For the argument is simply this: The authors of the books, which go under the name of the writings of the Apostolical Fathers, lived not long after the age, which is assigned to the Apostles. Certain parts of their works are ancient; and in those ancient parts, which may be distinguished from the interpolations of a later age they are continually speaking of the existence of a body of Christians.

### NOTE [II.] p. 277.

BISHOP Watson thinks, that a passage in the Natural History of Pliny contains a strong allusion to the Christians, and clearly intimates that he had heard of their miracles. In speaking of the origin of magic, Pliny says, as the Bishop translates him, There is also another faction of magic, derived from the Jews, Moses and Lotopea, and subsisting at present. Apol. Let. v.



## NOTE [III.] p. 277.

BISHOP Watson, in his *Apology for Christianity*, Let. v. has shown, that the darkness at the death of our Saviour, though miraculous, was not very profound; that it extended a few miles only about Jerusalem; and did not last but three hours: that consequently it would not probably excite the attention, or even be heard of by any person living in Rome.

## NOTE [IV.] p. 279.

THE result may be better understood, if it is exhibited in another form: Of the whole number of heathen authors, who flourished between the years 27 and 117, fourteen could not have spoken of the existence of a body of Christians; five perhaps might have mentioned them, but have not; their silence however is an objection of little weight, as they have omitted many other facts, which undoubtedly existed in that age: finally, eight of the authors of that period either speak of the Christians by name, or probably allude to them.

## NOTE [V.] p. 280.

IT may be unnecessary to remind the reader, that the virtues of Trajan were those of a heathen, who held it not unlawful to make war on any nation, whom he had power to conquer. He might have learned from the persecuted Christians of Bithynia, that he had no right to subdue the Armenians and Assyrians.

## NOTE [VI.] p. 281.

Tasso speaks of the discovery of America ; and Owen has one epigram on Columbus, and another on Sir Francis Drake. But the voyages of these two celebrated navigators were splendid events, and might be supposed to excite the attention of European authors ; whereas the settlement of Virginia and New England, though of much more importance in the history of the world than the subjugation of the Mexicans and Peruvians, was, like the establishment of the Christians in the Roman empire, humble and unobserved at the beginning, and was not thought worthy of notice till a great nation had been formed.

## SERMON XXIII.

CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES RENDER THE HEART BENEVOLENT.

---

1 TIM. II. 8, 9, 10.

¶ WILL THEREFORE .... THAT WOMEN ADORN THEMSELVES ....  
WHICH BECOMETH WOMEN PROFESSING GODLINESS, WITH  
GOOD WORKS.

IT is not difficult to comprehend the language of the text. By professing godliness is to be understood the profession of the Christian religion, which is the doctrine according to godliness. Christian women profess to love and worship God. Good works is a phrase of extensive meaning. In some places, and probably in the text, 'it intends virtue in general; but it sometimes more particularly signifies deeds of charity. Thus it is said of Dorcas, that she was full of good works, and alms deeds, which she did. In like manner, St Paul, in the fifth chapter of this Epistle, by good works undoubtedly means works of charity: for describing a widow, who is well reported of for good works, he says, she has brought up children, she has lodged strangers, she has washed the saints' feet, she has relieved the afflicted. Again, in the sixth chapter of this same Epistle, the Apostle charges the rich, that they do good, that they be rich in good

works ; that is, as he explains himself, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate. I trust therefore, that I shall not pervert the sense of the Apostle, if, without losing sight of its more extensive signification, by good works, in the present discourse, I understand charitable deeds ; and treat the duty of women, who profess the Christian religion, to practise beneficence.

The conditions of women are various ; but it will suit the design of my discourse, to consider them in the two states, first, of prosperity, and secondly, of adversity. In both these states, there are some who neglect, and there are others who perform, works of charity. By taking a view of different characters, we shall see what effect the profession of godliness, or pious and Christian principles, have on the heart, in rendering it tender and benevolent.

There are few, who do not desire to pass their lives in a state of prosperity. It is in particular the desire of young persons, to be gay, and flourishing, and affluent ; to be exempt from toil : to be able to command the services of others ; and to have power to gratify every wish, as soon as it is formed. But prosperity is a state of peculiar hazard. Where the mind is not imbued with piety ; where there is not a proper sense of the vanity of the world ; where there is a dread of looking at the miseries of human nature ; there is constant danger that the heart will become hard and selfish.

We perceive the worst effects of prosperity in the woman, who from her infancy has believed that she is born to command ; who has never been taught the lesson of

humility, or the duty of humanity. It is not enough to say of her, that she makes no profession of godliness. In this cause she is not indifferent: she has boldly taken a side, and is the undisguised enemy of religion. Her intelligence and her wit are employed in opposing and ridiculing Christianity, the most absurd doctrine of which, as she endeavors to convince herself and others, is the doctrine of immortality. Affluent and powerful, she defies public censure: she cares not what the world says of her, if it only acknowledges that her means of expense are without limits. But though her fortune is so large as to require no increase, though she is negligent and prodigal: still she is avaricious: she withholds the hire of the laborer; and she aims to augment her wealth by the mysteries of gaming, into which she deeply plunges. She views her domestics in the same light as the inferior animals, which are in her service; and she regards them as mere machines; to which no other attention ought to be paid, than to prevent their wearing out; but which are destitute of the nerves of feeling. "Closed up in glass, she rides securely," amidst the rains of March and the snows of December; and without pity beholds the pelting storm beat on the heads of the quadrupeds, which draw her splendid chariot, and the more unfortunate human being, who guides its rapid motion. For the poor of every description she has a supreme contempt. The persuasive tones of distress make no impression on her heart; but she banishes from her presence every object of pain, that her mirth and joy may receive no interruption. A faithful servant is seized with a burning fever, or pines with a lingering consumption. As he can now be of no further use, and has become an unpleasant spectacle, he is hurried

out of her house, to die in a distant hovel of wretchedness. She is humbly implored ; but she will afford him no assistance ; he is left to perish ; and his orphan children would soon follow him to the grave, if the compassionate Christians in the vicinity did not afford them an asylum.

You turn with disgust, and with a degree of incredulity, from the picture which I have exhibited to your view : but deformed as it is, every feature of it is copied from nature. We have to thank the goodness of God, that the character is as rare, as it is monstrous. The prosperous, who lose sight of their Maker, or wilfully exclude him from their minds ; who think that they are not born for others, but for themselves only, that their wealth is given them to be spent on their own pleasures, and not to be imparted to the needy ; are constantly exposed to relapse into this lowest stage of depravity : evil habits insensibly grow worse and worse ; and even woman, whose breast Heaven designed for the seat of compassion, may by degrees become thus selfish, proud, and inhuman.

2. I would direct your attention to a less criminal, and more common, character. A woman has spent her youth without the practice of any remarkable virtue, or the commission of anything which is flagrantly wrong : and she is now united with a man, whose moral endowments are not more distinguished than her own ; but who is industrious, rich, and prosperous. Against the connexion she had no objection ; and it is what her friends entirely approved. His standing in life is respectable ; and they both pass along, without scandal, but without much approbation of their own consciences, and without

any loud applause from others : for the love of the world is the principle, which predominates in their bosoms ; and the world never highly praises its own votaries. She is not absolutely destitute of the external appearance of religion ; for she constantly attends church in the afternoon, unless she is detained by her guests ; and in the morning, unless she is kept at home by a slight indisposition, or unfavorable weather, — which she supposes happen more frequently on Sundays than other days, — and which, it must be confessed, are several degrees less inconvenient and less unpleasant, than similar causes, which prevent her going to a party of pleasure. This however is the end of her religion, such as it is ; for when she is at church, she does not think herself under obligations to attend to what is passing there, and to join in the worship of her Maker. She cannot with propriety be called a woman professing godliness : for she makes no public profession of love to her Saviour : she does only what is customary ; and she would do still less, if the omission was decorous. Of domestic religion there is not even a semblance. As her husband does not think proper to pray with his family, so she does not think proper to pray with her children, or to instruct them in the doctrines and duties of Christianity. On the gospel however no ridicule or contempt is cast ; and twice or thrice in a year, thanks are given to God at her table, that is, when a minister of religion is one of her guests. No time being consumed in devotion, much is left for the care of her house, to which she attends with worldly discretion. Her husband is industrious in acquiring wealth ; and she is equally industrious in spending it in such a manner, as to keep up a genteel appearance. She is prudent in managing her affairs, and suffers noth-

ing to be wasted through thoughtlessness. In a word, she is a reasonable economist ; and there is a loud call, though she is affluent, that she should be so, as her expenses are necessarily great.

But she is an economist, not for the indigent, but for herself ; not that she may increase her means of doing good, but that she may adorn her person and the persons of her children with gold, and pearls, and costly array ; not that she may make a feast for the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind, but that she may make a dinner or a supper for her rich neighbors, who will bid her again. Though the preparations for these expensive dining and evening parties are more irksome, than the toils of the common laborer ; yet she submits to them with readiness ; for she loves the world, and she loves the approbation, which she hopes the world will bestow on the brilliancy of her decorations, and the exquisite taste of her high-seasoned viands and delicious wines. For this reputation she foregoes the pleasure which she would feel, in giving bread to the fatherless, and in kindling the cheerful fire on the hearth of the aged widow. Thus, though she has many guests at her board, yet she is not hospitable ; and though she gives much away, yet she is not charitable ; for she gives to those, who stand in no need of her gifts.

I call not this woman completely selfish : — for she loves her family. She is sedulous in conferring on her daughters a polite education, and in settling them in the world as reputably, as she is established herself. For her sons she is still more anxious : because the sons of the rich are frequently addicted to extravagance ; and she is desirous to preserve them from dissipations, which would tarnish the good name that she would have them



enjoy in the world, and which above all would impair their fortunes. But here her affection terminates. She loves nothing out of the bosom of her own family : for the poor and the wretched she has no regard. It is not strictly accurate to say, that she bestows nothing on them ; because she sometimes gives in public charities, when it would not be decent to withhold her donations ; and she sometimes gives more privately, when she is warmly solicited, and when all her friends and neighbors give : but in both cases she concedes her alms with a cold and unwilling mind. She considers it in the same light, as her husband views the taxes which he pays to the government, as a debt which must be discharged, but from which she would be glad to escape.

As a rational woman however must not be supposed to conduct herself without reason, she endeavors to find excuses for her omissions. Her first and great apology is, that she has poor relations to provide for. In this apology there is truth. Mortifying as she feels it to be, it must be confessed that she is clogged with indigent connexions, who are allowed to come to her house, when she has no apprehension that they will be seen by her wealthy visitants. As it would be a gross violation of decency, and what every one would condemn as monstrous, for her to permit them to famish, when she is so able to relieve them, she does indeed bestow something on them ; but she gives it sparingly, reluctantly, and haughtily. She flatters herself however, that she has now done everything which can with justice be demanded of her, and that other indigent persons have not a claim on her bounty.

Another apology is, that the poor are vicious, and do not deserve her beneficence. By their idleness and in-

temperance they have brought themselves to poverty. They have little regard to truth ; and though it must be allowed that their distress is not altogether imaginary ; yet they are ever disposed to exaggerate their sufferings. Whilst they are ready to devour one another, they are envious toward the rich, and the kindness of their benefactors they commonly repay with ingratitude. To justify these charges, she can produce many examples ; and she deems that they are sufficient excuses for her want of humanity. But she forgets in the meanwhile, that the Christian woman, who sincerely loves God and her neighbor, in imitation of her heavenly Father, is kind to the evil as well as the good, to the unthankful as well as the grateful.

3. I proceed to a character still less criminal. A young woman, in a state of prosperity, is not yet much corrupted by the world, and has not entirely lost the simplicity and innocence of her early years. She has passed her childhood diligently and laudably, in the acquisition of those elegant accomplishments, which are so highly ornamental to the daughters of the rich ; and she is now the pride of her parents, and the object of general admiration. Of religion she has more appearance, than the character before described ; for she not only goes to church, but she attends there frequently and with pleasure. In truth, nothing, except a well-acted play or interesting novel, affords her so much delight, as a discourse, which is elegantly composed, and eloquently delivered, and which sparkles with brilliant metaphors, and original similes. She is in particular charmed with sweet-toned, pathetic sermons, which fill her eyes with tears, and her bosom with soft emotions ; but for

those plain discourses, which probe the human heart, which point out the danger of prosperity, and inculcate the necessity of self-denial and humility, she has very little relish. Humility in particular, that grace which is so essential in the character of a true Christian, is a virtue to which she is a stranger. She entertains an exalted idea of her own dignity; and esteems nothing in this world so important, so sublime, so celestial, as a beautiful and accomplished young woman. But though she is not humble, yet she has somewhat of the appearance of humility: for she is modest in her thoughts and delicate in her manners. Religion with her is a matter of taste, but not of action. She makes judicious observations on the sermons which she hears, and on the prayers, as far as they are the subjects of criticism; but she neither prays with her heart, nor does she receive with meekness into her heart the engrafted word. Of godliness she has not yet made a profession; for this is a business which belongs to the old and the wretched, and not to the young and the cheerful. Her behaviour in her family, and in society however, may in general be said to be without reproach. As she receives the homage of every one who approaches her, she is careful to return respect; and there is no want in her of that condescension, which is consistent with a high degree of self-complacence. Of candor she possesses, if not a liberal, yet not an unusual portion. She never calumniates any one; and if she sometimes makes herself merry with the foibles of her absent friends, her wit is without malice, and is designed only to excite the mirth of the present company. In effect she loves, or at least thinks that she loves, her friends with uncommon ardor; and her private letters to them are replete with the warmest

expressions of affection, with the most generous and disinterested sentiments. For charity she entertains a fond regard. Charity, that divine nymph, which descends from the skies, with an eye beaming with benignity, a cheek glowing with compassion, a foot light as a zephyr silently stepping near the couch of anguish, and a soft hand gently opened for the solace of the daughters of wo ; charity which she cannot figuratively describe, without literally describing the loveliness of her own face, and the graces of her own person ; charity is so charming a form, that no mind, she thinks, can contemplate her without delightful emotions. Her refined taste in benevolence, and the books which she has read, teach her highly to value this godlike virtue ; and she impatiently longs for an opportunity of displaying her liberality in such a magnificent style, as to overwhelm with gratitude the object of her bounty. But the sufferer, whom she has imaged in her mind, is as elegant as herself ; and though poor, yet without any of the mean concomitants of poverty. For the real poor, who daily pass before her eyes, who are gross and vulgar, rude in their speech, base in their sentiments, and squalid in their garments, she has little sympathy. Farthings would comfort them, but she gives them nothing ; for her ambition is to pour handfuls of guineas into the lap of poor Maria, a lovely and unfortunate girl, who would thank her in pathetic and polished language. Thus she passes her youth, praising and affecting benevolence, but without the actual performance of good works ; and should not her heart in season be touched with piety and Christian charity, when she enters the conjugal state, she sinks into the cold and selfish matron, whom I have already exposed to your view.

Such are the prosperous women, who adorn themselves with gold, and pearls, and costly array, but not with good works ; who are vain and worldly-minded, and not meek and humble ; who live for themselves, but have no pity for the poor. May I not be permitted to address them in the bold language of the Prophet Isaiah ? Tremble, ye women, that are at ease ; hear my voice, ye careless daughters. These are not the steps which lead to heaven. But the liberal woman deviseth liberal things ; and by liberal things only can she stand without dismay before the judgment seat of Christ.

4. After contemplating the worldly-minded and the selfish, we turn our eyes with pleasure on the pious and benevolent woman. As she professes and believes the Christian religion, she is persuaded that the best, the only foundation of the love of her neighbor is the love of God ; or, as St John teaches, that he who loveth God, will love his brother also. She erects therefore the superstructure of her good works on the basis of piety. For the affluence, with which Heaven has blessed her, she is thankful ; but she has a proper sense of the danger of her situation. She is therefore constantly on her guard to preserve herself from yielding to the temptations, to which she is peculiarly exposed ; and she endeavors to convert what is the cause of the corruption and misery of so many, into the means of moral improvement and advancement in the way of salvation. As she is afraid of nothing so much as of forgetting her Maker, she directs her thoughts perpetually toward him : and as she fears that she may become vain and haughty, she is assiduous in cultivating the virtue of humility. She never loses sight of the solemn truth, that she must

die ; that the grave is the end of the rich as well as the poor ; that there the prosperous must lie down, as well as the wretched ; and that after death she must appear at the bar of God, where rank and fortune will be of no avail. Firmly persuaded of the vanity of sublunary objects, there is nothing which attaches her strongly to the world. She knows that the present life is a state of probation, in which she has to perform diligently and faithfully the part, which her Maker has assigned her ; and that she must do all the good which she can. She determines therefore to devote her wealth to the glory of God, and the promotion of happiness among his rational offspring.

In her youth, whilst she is the delight, the joy of her parents, of her brothers, and of the servants of the family, by her obedience, her affection, her affability, condescension, and tenderness, she looks abroad for objects to whom she may impart consolation. She bestows meat and drink on the hungry and thirsty traveller. She clothes the naked poor with garments, which she makes up with her own hands. She carries cordials to her sick neighbors ; and as she sits by the side of their beds, her kind words infuse healing balm into their wounded minds. From the liberal allowance, which her indulgent parents commit to her discretion, she contrives to save a large portion, which she devotes to the support and education of one or two orphan children. I do not here delineate a fiction : I speak of a woman, who once existed, but who now is in the tomb ; of a woman, who thus sanctified a state of prosperity by the practice of good works.

The Christian woman after she is established in life and is no longer under the control of her parents, but has a more ample use of the gifts of fortune, pursues the

same benevolent plan. Convinced that no person, who does not deliberate and reason, can conduct herself discreetly and virtuously, she determines to make herself perfectly acquainted with her duty, and to guide her heart and practice, not by instinct, not by enthusiastic and sudden impulses, but by order and rule. Judiciously weighing the relative importance of the several actions, which she is called to perform, she pays her first attention to those which are most essential. These are the duties that arise from the relations, in which she stands as a wife, a mother and a mistress. But having discharged the obligations, which she owes to her husband, her children, and her domestics; having provided for her household, and been scrupulously just in all her transactions; having paid the laborer his hire, and remunerated the services of the industrious; she bends her soul to deeds of charity. As economy is one of the best supports of liberality, she is careful that in her house nothing should be wasted, which will afford comfort and relief to the poor. But she does not merely feed the hungry with the crumbs, which fall from her table, or clothe the naked with the garments which she can no longer wear: she appropriates a certain part of her income to beneficence; and she regards it as a sacred treasure, which she cannot afterwards divert to her personal use. It would be impossible for me to enumerate all the benefits, which this fund diffuses around her. It beams on the chamber of the widow, and causes her heart to sing for joy: it carries light into the dark cells of the prison, restores the debtor to his family, and brings tears of gratitude into the hard eye of the condemned criminal. She devotes not only her wealth, but her time, her talents, her reason to works of charity. Convinced



that the miseries of the poor frequently spring from their vices, she exerts herself to remove the fatal cause. Without the haughty assumption of superiority, but with a mild and persuasive voice, when she imparts her bounty, she also imparts her good advice : and so eloquently does she plead the cause of virtue, and such force is there in her arguments, that she has sometimes the happiness of finding, that she has not only relieved the wants of the poor, but that she has reclaimed them from the errors of their ways ; that she has not only preserved their bodies from death, but that she has saved their souls alive. She is still more anxious to prevent wretchedness and sin, than she is to provide a remedy for them, after they exist. She therefore highly approves, and zealously promotes, such institutions as that, which occasions our present meeting, and which has this benevolent purpose in view. She rejoices that she is aided by other Christian friends, in producing what she cannot effect by her single power : in snatching the helpless infant from the jaws of penury ; in assuming the place of a mother to children whose parents are no more ; in placing them in an asylum, where they are out of the reach of the temptations, to which the female poor are peculiarly exposed ; where they are instructed to love and serve their Creator ; where, without filling their minds with extravagant expectations, they are “taught to be industrious, discreet, and good ;” and where, in fine, instead of being nuisances in the world, they are qualified to act a useful part in society. Whilst she thus diffuses blessings around her, the voice of gratitude attends her steps ; but she drinks not in with thirsty ear the flowing sound. Satisfied with the approbation of her heavenly Father, she seeks not the praise of men.



She thinks little of herself, and lives not for herself; but her whole soul is devoted to her family, to the poor, and to God.

II. I have now completed the delineations, which I purposed to make in the first part of my discourse; and I would request your renewed attention, whilst I proceed to the second, and exhibit women in a state of adversity, as neglecting or performing good works.

I. When adversity falls on a woman, who is destitute of religion, it sometimes renders her heart more hard and insensible. As she refuses to make use of the remedies, which the gospel points out; as she sees not the hand of God, and regards not her affliction as coming from a merciful Father; as she turns not her eye on the hope of immortality, and does not calm her grief with Christian patience and pious resignation: she has no other resource than worldly considerations. She may endeavor to reason away her sorrow by fallacious arguments, and false philosophy: but should she succeed, the only effect of the attempt will be, that she will ossify her nerves: that she will lose all love, all sympathy, all that renders life interesting and society precious. She may fly to the amusements and dissipations, which the world affords; she may, amidst the tumults of pleasure, make haste to forget the friend, with whom she passed the flower of her years, — and even the tender infant, who a few weeks ago smiled in her face, and whose marble form is now concealed by the clods of the valley: — but, in the moments of silence and retirement, her breast will be filled with murmuring and discontent, and with envy against those, who are more prosperous than herself. In the

heart of a woman, who makes so ill a use of adversity, no seat for charity can be found. The poor and every object of distress are chased away from her sight, as recalling recollections which it is painful to indulge ; and instead of being rendered more compassionate by her afflictions, she becomes more cold and inhuman.

2. Of the character, which I have thus drawn, there are examples in the world ; but the temper, which is manifested in it, is not the usual effect of calamity. For adversity not only in general makes a good heart better, but it also frequently makes a bad heart good. In truth, affliction is the school, where the lesson of humanity is the most thoroughly learned, and the most deeply impressed on the soul. When, my Christian friends, you contemplate a young woman, at her first entrance into life, and, on the one hand, regard the sorrows, to which she is almost unavoidably exposed, she is with you the object of the tenderest pity. When you perceive that she is as gay as she is innocent ; and discover from her conversation, that her bosom beats high with ardent expectations of felicity, that the face of nature is everywhere, in her romantic vision, covered with novelty and delight ; and reflect that ere long she will be called to mourn, — you feel a painful reluctance in damping her joy by a disclosure of the simple and melancholy truth. But when, on the other hand, you anticipate the moral and religious improvement, which she may derive from her afflictions, and how pious, humble, gentle, compassionate, and charitable she may become, the adversity, which she is to suffer, is no longer considered as an evil, but is converted into a positive good, as it undoubtedly is in the eyes of the Father of the universe.

Even in her early years, she is sometimes compelled to pass through the gloomy vale of misery ; and the loss of a mother at an age, when she requires the attention and love, which a mother only can bestow, overcloud her mind with the darkest sorrow. The afflictions of the young however, if they were to end with youth, might in time be forgotten ; but they are the preludes of griefs, which are still more poignant. She commences the career of domestic life, united with a man whom her heart and reason approve ; the prospect before her is pleasant ; but in a moment he is snatched from her sight. She has reared up a daughter, and enriched her understanding with many accomplishments, and her soul with many virtues ; but when the beautiful flower is expanding to the sun, it is nipt by the frost of disease, and all its sweets and all its glory are laid in the dust. She has a son, of whom, if it was lawful for a human being to be proud of anything, she would have cause to boast ; for he is manly and brave, generous and discreet, and above all affectionate and obedient to her ; but neither her tears nor prayers can retain his breath : he falls ; and with him all worldly hope expires. Sometimes death is so merciless, that he extinguishes the lives of all her children ; and though one darling child may be spared a few years after the rest, yet at last, to adopt the pathetic language of the sacred Scriptures, the only coal which remains is quenched, and she is left without a name or remainder on earth. These representations, distressing as they may be, are not high colored paintings ; they are events, which happen every day.

But the woman, who professes and believes the Christian religion, whose soul rests on God, stands firm amidst the wreck of all her earthly bliss ; and the more she en-

dures the collisions of adversity, the brighter do her virtues shine. For she beholds the hand of a Father and Friend, all whose dispensations, however dark they may appear, are wise and gracious ; and she believes that she is immortal, and that in a better world she will find ample compensation for all her sufferings. We have seen her, when sorely bruised, look up to heaven with hope, with patience, and with resignation ; and whilst she has humbly prayed, that God would remove his hand from her, she has been ready to receive a still deeper wound, if it was the will of him who made her. A heart thus meek and pious, which so sincerely and ardently loves the Supreme Being, is the place in which charity takes up its favorite abode. Of the woman, who possesses it, it is the desire and delight to do good. Whilst the noise of mirth passes unheeded by, her ear is opened to the notes of grief. She listens to the plaintive sound, and repairs with ready feet to the object from whom it proceeds. She imparts to the afflicted the light, which the gospel has shed into her own heart. She calms, and comforts, and supports, the mourning widow ; she weeps with, and soothes, and consoles, the bereaved parent. In her the poor, the sick, and the distressed find a constant friend ; and fatherless children are the objects of her tenderness and care.

I know not how far the portraits, which I have drawn in this discourse, may suit the characters of any persons who are present ; but as the last, my beloved sisters, is most applicable to your situation, I would hope that it is also a just picture of your hearts. In contemplating the faces of the members of your society, though I perceive some, whose prosperity has yet been without interruption ; yet

I see many more, who have passed through adversity. I behold the widow ; the daughter, whose parents are in the tomb ; the mother, whose child is dead ; the sister, who cannot discern among the youths of this assembly the face of her beloved brother. That you should seek for consolation in the practice of good works, is what might be expected. A sight of the tender orphans whom you have rescued from want, misery, and temptation, must in particular soothe your agitated bosoms. Their helpless age must interest your compassion ; and sweet must their infantile voices sound in your affectionate ears. May the best of beings reward you for your kindness to them ; and may you derive from your charitable exertions a remedy for your own sorrows.

But you must not terminate your labors here : you must persevere in well doing without relaxation. As you profess yourselves the children of the God of love, you are bound to imitate his unlimited goodness ; as you call yourselves the disciples of the benevolent Jesus, you are obliged to copy every part of his merciful example. When he was on earth, he constantly went about doing good. He not only took up young children in his arms and blessed them ; but he healed the sick ; he expelled from the mind the demons of doubt and despair ; he bound up the broken-hearted ; he opened the prison doors to them who were in chains ; he comforted all who mourned. As far as you can, you should go and do likewise. Wretched objects surround you on all sides ; but with the means and talents, which you possess, it is in your power to lessen the evils, which they endure. You have only piously and courageously to resolve, that you will forget yourselves ; that you will not live for yourselves, but for others ; that wherever the sound of

distress strikes your ears, you will fly to its relief; and that you will not voluntarily add anything to the mass of wo, which may load the earth. This as Christians you ought to do; for the great object of the Christian religion is to promote the love of God and the love of man. This is the point, in which all agree; and which has been acknowledged to be important in all ages of the church, as well in those which have been dark, as in those which are enlightened. This, if we may credit St Paul, will never fail. Prophecies will fail, tongues will cease, and knowledge will vanish away; but charity, or love, will continue forever. Faith, it is true, abideth; and hope abideth; but love is the greatest of the three. For when misery sprang up out of the earth, the Father of the human race, who pitied his erring offspring, and graciously determined to restore them to happiness, sent from heaven these three angelic messengers, — faith, hope, and love. Faith sang the wonders of redemption; and resounded through the air, Glory to the Most High, for the Saviour is come; peace on earth; forgiveness to the penitent! Hope expanded wide the gates of immortality; and disclosed to the enraptured eye of man the regions of everlasting bliss. But love, the most potent of them all, seized his willing hand; and ascended with him, on rapid wings, to the throne of God.

Before the Boston Female Asylum, Sept. 1808.

## SERMON XXIV.

NECESSITY.

---

JOSH. XXIV. 15.

CHOOSE YOU THIS DAY WHOM YE WILL SERVE.

THE most difficult question in metaphysics is, whether man is a necessary agent, that is, whether all his thoughts and actions are of necessity what they are, being parts of a chain, not one link of which he can break. This question has in all ages perplexed the human understanding, and it is probably one, which man cannot answer ; for the wisest and most learned philosophers, who have written on it, have not been able to render it clear, or to remove the principal difficulties and contradictions, in which it is involved. When, by their aid, we have pushed our inquiries as far as possible into the subject, and have been both puzzled and vexed with the doctrine, we are obliged at last to stop, with the conviction that the mind of man is dark, and his faculties extremely limited ; that we know very little, and that we see objects, only as they are reflected from a rough mirror. The doctrine of necessity not only transcends the human understanding ; but some suppose that it is above the comprehension of any finite being. This is the bold



thought of Milton, who introduces the devils as tormenting their souls with this abstruse inquiry.

I would refer those persons, who, notwithstanding the opinion of Milton, still think it possible to obtain correct ideas of the subject, to the works of Edwards, Hartley, Priestley, and Crombie, on the side of necessity ; and of Butler, Clarke, Reid, and Price, on the side of freedom. It is not my intention to enter deeply into the question, or to undertake to decide a controversy, which has puzzled, not only the princes of philosophy, but the princes of Pandæmonium. All that I purpose to do in this discourse is, to make a few observations, which must be allowed to be true, whatever becomes of the question of necessity, and which are designed to guard against the abuses, which are sometimes made of the doctrine.

In the first place, they, who plead for the doctrine of necessity, mean by it, not natural, but moral, necessity. This distinction is readily understood ; and it is made by the best writers on the subject. Men are not confined in chains, nor restrained by bolts and bars ; but they are controlled by motives only. They have power to do what they will ; but what is under the dominion of necessity is the will itself.

Secondly, if the will of man is not free, or if man himself is not free, it is because freedom is absolutely impossible in the nature of things ; it is because a free being cannot be created by Omnipotence itself. The arguments for necessity impel us to this conclusion. If we admit them, we admit them for the same reason that we allow, that not even divine power can make two and two equal to five. On the other hand, if the freedom of



the will is a possibility, then man possesses, and has always possessed it. None of the reasoning, which is employed in this question, tends to demonstrate, that man was once free, but that he has been deprived of his freedom. The doctrine is not connected with the doctrine of original sin; but to prove that man comes into the world a depraved being, if it can be proved, recourse must be had to other arguments, and not to necessity. In a word, the main argument for necessity would be exactly the same, if there was no such effect as sin in the universe.

Thirdly, if man is not a free agent, the same arguments, which establish this position, go far in demonstrating, that the Supreme Being is a necessary agent. For if the human mind is not free, because it is governed by motives, can any other mind be free, if it is influenced by similar causes? To destroy the force of this reasoning, shall we say, that the wisest of beings acts without motives? This assertion will not be made by any person of reflection and piety. The conclusion therefore is unavoidable, that there is no freedom on earth, and none in heaven. This daring proposition is maintained by Cooper, and several other necessarians; and it must be confessed, that in this respect they have the merit of consistency.

Fourthly, the doctrine of necessity, whether true or not, is not taught in the sacred Scriptures. Without entering into any metaphysical disquisitions, they take it for granted, and frequently assert in plain terms, that man is a free agent. The Scriptures, if it true, assert the providence and foreknowledge of God; and from

these truths metaphysical divines have inferred the doctrine of necessity: but as the Scriptures themselves do not make the inference, the argument stands on the same ground, as the arguments, which are derived from the reason and nature of things. There are, it is conceded, obscurities and difficulties in the subject; but as one doctrine is not more clearly and positively affirmed than the other, we must reconcile them together as well as we can, remembering always, that we have no more right to give up the doctrine of free agency, because it appears inconsistent with the providence and foreknowledge of God, than we have to abandon the doctrine of the providence and foreknowledge of God, because it appears inconsistent with free agency.

Fifthly, necessity, if the doctrine is true, must extend to everything; not only to actions, but to motives; not only to consequences, but to causes: every link of the chain must be indissoluble. There can be but one agent in the universe: God must be the author of everything which exists, of evil, as well as good, of sin, as well as holiness. The timid necessarian startles at these conclusions. As he allows, that God hates nothing which he has made, he is afraid to say, that God is the author of moral evil, lest he should be found to assert that God does not hate sin. But this consequence, whether absurd or not, whether pernicious or harmless, is justly chargeable to the doctrine of necessity. It is boldly admitted by the consistent necessarian; and he endeavors to divest it of its horrors, by maintaining that the moral evil, which exists in the universe, is absolutely necessary to the production of good, and is created for the sake of displaying the boundless majesty of the eternal God.

Sixthly, if necessity extends to every effect, it must be so complete, that it is the same thing to us, as if it did not exist. One part of our nature being moved by external power, as well as another, the appearance is exactly the same, as if there was no motion whatever. The globe, which we inhabit, is impelled round the sun; but as we and all the objects on it revolve with it, it seems to us to be at rest: so our minds may be impelled; but as everything within us and around us is subject to the same law, the impulse is not perceived. This I say on the supposition, that the doctrine of necessity is true: but if, on the other hand, the doctrine of freedom is a truth, free agency also must be complete; it must extend to all the motions, which are called voluntary. Man must possess the same freedom in religion as in the common actions of life; and as no person of a sound mind suffers the doctrine of necessity to influence him in his temporal concerns, he ought not to suffer it to have any influence in the great business of piety and virtue.

Lastly, we are conscious that we are free; we feel in all respects as we should feel, if the doctrine of necessity was false. For every practical purpose therefore it must be false to us. When we are virtuous, necessity does not prevent us from enjoying self-approbation. On the other hand, when we do wrong, necessity does not disarm remorse of its sting: conscience still retains its dominion: it whispers peace to our souls, or sounds in our ears the alarm of death and misery. Thus it is in this world; and will it not be so in the other world? Will it be of any avail to plead the doctrine of necessity at the bar of God; but if we have done good, shall we

not be rewarded ; if we have done evil, shall we not be punished ?

It may be concluded from the observations, which have been made, that necessity, though philosophy may have strong arguments to allege in its defence, is not the doctrine of common sense, is not the doctrine of the Scriptures. It may amuse or confound the learned in the retirement of their studies ; but it ought not to be brought before the public ; it ought not to be talked of in the streets ; it ought not to be proclaimed in the pulpit. When it is philosophical necessity, when it is admitted completely, and connected with the belief that God is infinitely good, it is perhaps a harmless opinion : but when it is forced into the brains of the ignorant, who can understand it neither in whole nor in part ; when it is associated with the terrific doctrines of reprobation, total depravity, and everlasting misery, it becomes worse than useless : it overwhelms their minds, and fills them with gloom ; and it is frequently accompanied with bitterness of spirit and unrelenting severity. Its supposed influence on religion induces many to appear in its defence, but this advantage is altogether imaginary.

For it is not peculiarly favorable to what they most highly prize, to what they call orthodoxy, as it may be made consistent with Arminianism, as well as with Calvinism ; and accordingly writers of both these denominations have espoused the doctrine of necessity.

Nor is it peculiarly favorable to piety ; because it does not exalt the power, wisdom, and goodness of God more than the doctrine of freedom, and in truth not so highly, as it is certainly a more splendid display of those attributes to create an intelligent agent, endowed with choice, than to form a mere machine, however curious.

Nor is it peculiarly favorable to humility. Humility consists in not thinking of ourselves highly, and in being sorry and ashamed, when we have done wrong : but if our actions are a necessary part of the chain of events, we are as important in the universe, as the most exalted archangel in heaven, and there is nothing, for which we ought to be either ashamed or sorry. A mountain may figuratively be called proud, and a valley, humble ; but literally speaking, the former is only high, and the latter, low : it is the same with the mind of man ; if all its motions are necessary, and it believes that they are so, it has no cause for humility.

18th S. after Whitsunday.

# SERMON XXV.

## SUMMARY OF DUTIES.

---

### ECCLES. XII. 13.

LET US HEAR THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER:  
FEAR GOD, AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS; FOR THIS IS  
THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN.

THE sermon, in which one subject is discussed, one doctrine explained, one vice condemned, or one virtue recommended, is allowed by judicious persons to be the most intelligible and the most useful. The reason is, that the attention is distracted amidst a variety of particulars, when more than one subject is treated in the same discourse. But though this reason is undoubtedly of weight, and the rule which is founded on it is highly proper, yet it may be necessary sometimes to deviate from it. It may be necessary sometimes to show what is the substance of religion and morality. It may be necessary sometimes to treat the several duties together, that we may point out their connexion with each other. In fine, it may sometimes be necessary to do, what I purpose to do at present, to exhibit in miniature the sum of what has been spoken in many discourses.

On this day which closes our religious year, I will take the liberty to recapitulate the substance of the ser-

mons, which I have preached to you since Whitsunday, and to deliver a comprehensive exhortation on several important duties of prudence, virtue, and piety.

The fear of the Lord, says the wise man, is the beginning of wisdom. I exhort you therefore, my brethren, in the first place, to build the whole of your duty on the foundation of piety. Love God above every other object: and dread the violation of his commands as the worst of evils. Elevate your minds with the contemplation of his attributes. Let his power and wisdom excite your admiration; let his justice inspire you with fear; let his goodness fill your hearts with joy. Contemplate him, not only as your creator and judge, but as your tender father and best friend. Never speak of religion in a light and irreverent manner; and dare not to blaspheme the Majesty of heaven: for remember that God will not hold him guiltless, who taketh his name in vain. Let not the fear of being thought superstitious induce you to conceal the devotion, which glows in your heart. Consecrate your bodies as well as your souls to God. Reverence the day of sacred rest, which in all Christian countries is devoted to religion. Constantly attend public worship, unless prevented by necessity or the calls of mercy: but go to church, not for the sake of criticising the language of the preacher, who being, like yourselves, a weak and imperfect mortal, stands in need of all your candor; and not for the sake of being charmed with the harmonious periods and ornamental diction of a splendid oration; but for the sake of being instructed in your duty, and of paying homage to the Supreme Being. Let the Father of all the families of the earth be publicly worshipped each day in your houses; and

let your fervent and grateful prayers frequently ascend in secret to him, who seeth in secret, and who will reward you openly. In a word, let God be in all your thoughts. Consider yourselves as ever in his presence, and as acting under his eye. This consideration will preserve you from sin, and animate you to the practice of every good work.

Next to God, let your Saviour Jesus Christ be the object of your ardent affection. It is the happiness of the Christian, that he has received his religion from a person, who has not only taught him a complete system of duty, but has also established the whole by his own immaculate example. Learn of Jesus what the LORD your God has required of you ; and you will obtain rest unto your souls. Obey all his commands ; comply with all the ordinances which he has instituted, particularly with the sacred rite of the Lord's supper, which was ordained to commemorate the highest instance of his love to you, his submitting to death for the salvation of mankind. You feel it to be your duty to be grateful to your benefactors ; is it not then your duty in a supereminent degree to be grateful to your kind friend, to your generous benefactor, who has done and suffered so much for your benefit ? Let not the sophistry of infidels shake your faith, or induce you to reject the Christian religion before you have carefully examined its evidence. If you attend to it with seriousness and impartiality, you will probably believe that it is a system which came from heaven ; and you will submit to the authority of God, who has established its divinity by many infallible signs, by many convincing arguments. When you are persuaded of the truth of the Christian religion, dare to profess it openly. Be not ashamed of the gospel of



Christ, even in an age of infidelity. Study the doctrines of divine revelation, as they are contained in the New Testament, carefully rejecting the corrupt additions, which have been made to them by the craft of the designing, or the weakness of the superstitious. Let your faith be simple and rational ; equally removed from the two extremes, of credulity on the one hand, and skepticism on the other. Be neither bigoted nor indifferent in maintaining your religious opinions. In a word, as the disciples of Christ, be liberal in your principles, but piously strict, and virtuously scrupulous in your practice.

After the love of God and your Saviour, the most important duties of man are the relative duties. To few of you an opportunity is afforded of performing brilliant acts of virtue ; but all of you can fulfil the common obligations of life, by which the happiness of the world will be as effectually promoted. Say not then, that the commandment, which God commands you, is hidden from you, and that it is far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto you, in your mouth, and in your heart, in your house, and in your daily walks, that you may do it. If you act well in the relations of husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, master and servant, ruler and subject, you have then performed the greatest part of the duty which God requires of you.

In the words of St Paul, I exhort you, who are a husband, to love your wife, even as you love yourselves.

Give honor to her as the more delicate vessel : respect the delicacy of her frame, and the delicacy of her mind. Continue through life the same attention, the same manly tenderness, which in youth gained her affections. Reflect that though her bodily charms are decayed, as she is advanced in age, yet that her mental charms are increased ; and that though novelty is worn off yet that habit and a thousand acts of kindness have strengthened your mutual friendship. Devote yourself to her ; and after the hours of business, let the pleasures, which you most highly prize, be found in her society.

I exhort you, who are a wife, to be gentle and condescending to your husband. Let the influence, which you possess over him, arise from the mildness of your manners and the discretion of your conduct. Whilst you are careful to adorn your person with neat and clean apparel, — for no woman can long preserve affection, if she is negligent in this point, — be still more attentive in ornamenting your mind with meekness and peace, with cheerfulness and good humor. Lighten the cares, and chase away the vexations, to which men in their commerce with the world are unavoidably exposed, by rendering his house pleasant to your husband. Keep at home : let your employments be domestic, and your pleasures domestic.

To both husband and wife I say : Preserve a strict guard over your tongues, that you never utter anything which is rude, contemptuous, or severe ; and over your tempers, that you never appear sullen and morose. Endeavor to be perfect yourselves, but expect not too much from each other. If any offence arises, forgive it ; and think not that a human being can be exempt from faults.

I exhort you, parents, to love your children. Make them as happy as is consistent with innocence. Remember that the periods of childhood and youth soon pass away ; and that they ought not to be deprived of any satisfactions, which of right belong to them. Let your government be mild and equable. Provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. Irritate not their tempers with severity ; torture not their hearts with cruelty. The love of power is so natural to man, that even parents are in danger of displaying too much in the management of their children, and of exacting from them too slavish a submission. The wills of children should be regulated, but not broken. Be careful therefore, whilst you aim to make them modest and obedient, that you do not render them diffident and servile ; that you do not stifle manliness of sentiment, and heroism of conduct ; that you do not disqualify them from serving their country as seamen and soldiers, as statesmen and orators. But in avoiding this extreme, guard at the same time against an excessive indulgence, an error, which is equally pernicious. Do not, for the sake of gratifying them in a present moment, lay up for them many future years of bitter repentance. Though the minds of children may be innocent, yet they are not, previous to instruction, positively virtuous. They are a soil, where every kind of seed will vegetate. Now the air is filled with the seeds of vice : Pluck up therefore the weeds of evil, as soon as they appear. Be constantly employed in cultivating the manners, the understandings, and the hearts of your offspring. Let the hours, which are not spent in the schools of judicious and enlightened preceptors, be passed under your own eyes. Let not your children be educated in the street, where

they will be in constant danger of learning impure and profane language, and of becoming rude, mischievous, and quarrelsome. In fine, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the LORD: make them pious Christians and good men. Remember that you are intrusted with an important charge; and that the welfare of your country, and the prosperity of the church depend on your domestic discipline; for the best and wisest laws, and the most rational and instructive preaching avail little in a country, where family government is generally neglected.

I exhort you, children, to love, obey, and honor your parents. Let your mother in particular, who, in your tender years, has the more immediate charge of you, be, on earth, the most sacred object of your affections. Let her be your first friend and chief confidant. Conceal nothing from her: but make her acquainted with the company which you keep, the books which you read, and even the faults which you commit. Happy is the son, and particularly happy is the daughter, who is not afraid to communicate to her mother her most secret thoughts. Whilst she remains thus artless and undisguised, she is in little danger of losing her innocence. Children, obey your parents in your youth; but when you are no longer under their care, let not your reverence abate. If by the providence of God, you should rise above them in the world, grow not ashamed of them. When they are bending under the infirmities of old age, still continue to treat them with respect, as well as affection.

I exhort you, brothers and sisters, to love each other. Live in peace; and let not jealousy and contention imbitter the sources of domestic happiness.

I exhort you, masters, to treat your servants with kindness. Whilst, on the one hand, you are careful to maintain your authority, on the other hand, be still more on your guard against contempt and haughtiness. Exact not more of them than their strength permits. Allow them hours for recreation and for the public worship of their Maker. Pay them their wages punctually. Remember that there is no difference between you and them, except what arises from the accidental circumstances of fortune: and that though they are your inferiors in situation, yet that they are your equals as immortal beings, and as the children of God.

I exhort you, servants, to be subject to your masters. Be sober, diligent, and faithful. Defraud them not of their property; defraud them not of their time. Be not eye-servants: but conduct yourselves as the disciples of Christ: and forget not, that though your masters may be absent, yet that you are always in the presence of your Maker.

I exhort you, rulers, to be just men, and to rule in the fear of God.

I exhort you, citizens, to pray for the peace and prosperity of your native country. Respect your rulers, and obey the laws of the government. Consider the taxes, which are assessed by legal authority, as a debt which you justly owe. Attend the public meetings of your fellow citizens on all important occasions; give your vote, whenever you have a right to do it; and exert your influence in favor of wise and good men. If you are called to exercise a public office, for which you are qualified, let not the love of ease, false modesty, or the fear of the ingratitude of a capricious multitude prevent you from accepting it; but serve your country to the

best of your abilities, despising censure, and overlooking every personal inconvenience, whilst you are conscious that you are doing your duty.

I exhort you, men, to take heed to yourselves. Be temperate and chaste. Go not to the houses of riot and drunkenness : frequent not the company of the impure and debauched. Let not your corruptible bodies press down your souls ; but subject all your appetites and passions to the dominion of reason.

As a branch of temperance, and as promoting your own comfort and the comfort of others, I would recommend to you to be neat in your persons, your dress, and your houses. Cleanliness has been styled a half virtue ; and by the power of association, it naturally produces purity of mind.

As another branch of temperance, and as in particular conducing to health and usefulness, I would advise you to retire to rest long before midnight, and to accustom yourselves to breathe the salutary air of the morning. This practice will furnish you with many bright hours, in which you can make the most valuable acquisitions of knowledge, virtue, and piety.

Be industrious in performing the duties of your stations, industrious in obtaining manual skill, industrious in enriching your understandings with useful knowledge. Whilst you live, you must work ; or suffer the consequence, of becoming torpid in body, and discontented in mind.

Walk circumspectly : live by rule : divide the day into regular portions, and assign to each its proper employment.

Be honest in all your dealings ; true in your words ;

faithful to your engagements. If you have raised expectations, even by your looks and general course of behaviour, though you have not promised in words, be careful to fulfil them.

Whatever your income may be, endeavor to live within it ; not because you may provide against the infirmities of old age, though this is much to be wished for ; and not because you may have something to leave to your children, though this is also desirable ; but that you may keep your mind unembarrassed, that you may have power to perform all your engagements, that you may acquire the reputation, and enjoy the happiness, of being punctual. Settle your accounts regularly, and never suffer them to get into confusion. Think nothing your own, until you have paid for it. Do not fall into the mean habit of borrowing small sums of your friends and neighbors, and of never returning them. Wear your old garments, if you are not able to buy new ones. The necessities of life you must have, though to obtain them you are compelled to anticipate your earnings ; but never run in debt for its pleasures, or even its comforts.

If you are rich, be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. Appropriate a certain part of your income to the poor ; and let your charities be governed by method and discretion. Be not satisfied with giving to those, who ask you ; but seek out objects of distress. Be active and liberal in works, which may promote the comfort and welfare of your fellow citizens.

If you are poor, be not dispirited. Increase your diligence and sobriety, and rely on divine Providence, who will take care of you. Fret not yourselves at the sight of the rich and the great ; but content yourselves



with the moderate pleasures, which you can certainly obtain, if you are industrious.

If you have seen better days, and are, by misfortune, or by extravagance and imprudence, reduced to indigence, manfully reject every temptation to indulgence. Curtail your expenses within the bounds of simple necessities. If you have received a reluctant discharge from your creditors, and are able afterwards, without distressing your families, to pay them their full demands, remember, if you do not, that you are discharged, neither in the court of honor, the court of conscience, nor the court of heaven.

But if you be a creditor, be merciful. Make due allowance for former habits, and for the frailty of human nature.

Envy none their superior endowments, whether bodily or mental. If you build your happiness on the good opinion of others, if you love praise, envy, unless you are constantly on your guard, will enter your bosoms. Wherever you see beauty, talents, or popularity, you will be grieved that they are not your own. But courageously contend against the beginnings of so foul a vice. Whatever you think, let not your thoughts be audible. Whisper not a word of evil against those who excel you; but compel your hearts to rejoice at their success. Accustom yourselves to a generous manner of speaking of those, who outshine you; and with whatever reluctance you do this at first, you will in time bring over your feelings to the side of your reason.

Whilst you do not calumniate any one, who possesses more merit than yourselves, have too much dignity of sentiment to slander those, who, you suppose, have foibles and vices, from which you believe yourselves exempt.



Avoid pride, as an odious ; and vanity, as a contemptible vice. Be humble ; but talk not of your humility, nor affect it in your external deportment ; for, like certain volatile spirits, the virtue entirely evaporates, when it is exposed to the air. Let your humility appear chiefly to your heavenly Father, who is acquainted with every motion of your hearts.

Let there be no affectation in any part of your character ; but let sincerity govern all your actions. Be simple and undisguised, without any secrets and mysteries.

Be artless and unreserved in conversation, but at the same time discreet. Talk not too much : for you may repent of your rash speeches ; but will seldom have cause to repent of your silence.

Cover all your good qualities with the veil of modesty. Leave them to be discovered by others, and never ostentatiously display them.

Whilst you boast not of your good qualities, be constantly on your guard against your prevailing passion. Among all the sins, there is in particular one, which most easily besets you. There is a weak part in your mind, which you must endeavor to strengthen by all the means of reason and religion. Whether it is idleness, intemperance, irascibility, envy, pride or covetousness, fortify yourselves against the attack of the enemy. Leave not the place a moment exposed, but defend it night and day. You may yet stand ; but take heed, lest you fall. Be not high-minded, but fear.

Let moderation preside over all your conduct. Avoid extremes ; and balance one virtue by another. There is scarcely any action, however good it may be in itself, which, if carried too far, does not degenerate into a vice.

Be moderate in particular in your expectations of earthly felicity ; for this world is a scene of trial, and contains sorrow as well as joy.

But give not way to a discontented spirit. Happiness does not universally prevail, but it predominates even on earth. God is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. There are many pleasures of the senses, of which you may innocently partake ; and they are daily and hourly renewed. You have the pleasures of the imagination and understanding, of conversation and friendship, of sympathy and devotion. If you are young, you have indulgent parents to provide for your wants ; if in middle life, you have children to delight you : if advanced to old age, you have still your children for your companions, and in addition grandchildren, to excite your fondest affections.

Perhaps however, few of you are as happy, as you might be, because your hearts are not entirely free from the root of bitterness. Let me therefore exhort you to shun contention, and to live peaceably with all men. If you have had enemies, and they repent, forgive them ; and even if they do not repent, do not cherish resentment in your heart. You are not obliged to take them to your bosom ; but you are not allowed to hate them ; and if you are true Christians, you will return good for evil.

One powerful sentiment, that will check the anger which might otherwise arise in you, is this, that you are mortal. It is vain to feel resentment against a man, who in a few years or months will be consigned with you to the same common dust. In truth the serious reflection on death is a preservative against almost every vice. You will therefore frequently have it in your

minds. It will guard you against the snares of prosperity, and console you under adversity. Though you are rich, and great, and healthy, and popular, and eloquent, and wise, yet when you remember that there will soon be an end of all your prosperity in the dark and silent grave, you will not be puffed up with conceit. On the other hand, if you are poor, and mean, and sick, and despised, and friendless, and destitute, you will reflect that death is the cure of every evil. It restores your health and youth : it relieves you from every embarrassment : it removes every mortification. It brings you again into the presence of the beloved friends whom you have lost. It seats you in a place of safety, where temptation cannot assault, where care cannot vex you ; where there will not be either disease, or pain, or sin, or misery. Be mindful then that you must die. But reflect at the same time that the virtuous and pious only can have hope in death. When Jesus has restored you to life, you will be called before the bar of your judge ; where you will have to give an account for every idle and vain word, which you have uttered, for every impious and malignant deed, which you have committed ; and if you are found guilty, you will be consigned to a place of wretchedness, from which you cannot expect to be released, till the uttermost farthing is paid, till the infinitely wise and gracious purposes, which God designs in your punishment, are fully accomplished.

In fine, be ever mindful of the end for which you were created, which is — the unbounded love of God, and disinterested benevolence to all his rational creatures. The Christian religion has this great object in view ; and our Saviour has forcibly expressed it in the following words : Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy

heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength : and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. This is the perfection and happiness of your nature, a perfection, to which few have yet attained. But do you, my brethren, heroically resolve to aim at this height. As you have received of your instructors, how you ought to walk and please God, abound more and more. Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Strive continually to excel yourselves : and then will that animated happiness, which dwells in aspiring minds, still accompany you, and reward your progress.

This, my brethren, is the sum of what I have spoken to you during the past six months. I confess that it is nothing more than an imperfect sketch of your duty : but happily you have in your hands a discourse, which is able to supply all my deficiencies. This admirable discourse you have often read ; but I would request you to read it once more, and to impress its precepts deeply on your hearts. The discourse, to which I refer, is Christ's sermon on the mount. Never man spake like this man. If you sincerely practise what he taught, you will stand like a house, which is built on a rock. Though the rains descend, though the floods come, though the winds blow, yet it will not fall : Temptation will not shake you, affliction will not overwhelm you, death itself will not alarm you ; but after this short life is ended, you will be found heirs of glory, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, who will place you with him on his throne, where you will reign with him forever and ever.

S. before Advent,

# SERMON XXVI.

DUTIES OF CITIZENS.

---

PSALMS CXXII. 6.

PRAY FOR THE PEACE OF JERUSALEM: THEY SHALL PROSPER  
THAT LOVE THEE.

ON this day of public thanksgiving and prayer, we are reminded of the relations, in which the citizens of a state stand to each other, and of the duties, to which they are mutually obliged. I beg permission to lay before you a few thoughts on this subject, under the form of observations and inquiries; and I doubt not, that whilst you reject those parts of them, which appear to you erroneous, you will admit the parts, which are manifestly true.

1. The first observation is, that it is the duty of every person in society to love his country. The love of our country implies the obligation to exert all our talents, to establish the peace of the nation, to which we belong. Man owes something to himself, something to his family, something to his fellow citizens, and something to mankind at large. The two former obligations are approved by nature, which justifies every man in loving himself and family; and the latter is enjoined by the Christian religion, which inculcates universal benevolence: but

where these obligations interfere, we must yield our private and domestic interest to the interest of our country, and the interest of a foreign nation to that of our own. The obligation of sacrificing our private good to the good of the public may not be universally conceded; but that it is our duty to prefer our own nation to any other, will generally be allowed. The reason why this should be required of us is obvious: The prosperity of the world at large will be most effectually secured by every one of us promoting, as far as we can do it, the welfare of the nation, of which we are parts. The sphere of each man's agency is necessarily small; and he can seldom extend the effects of his good deeds to any country, except his own. It is our duty then to love our country, to pray for its peace and prosperity, to act with fidelity to the part assigned to us for the interest of the community, and to defend its rights and independence against hostile attacks. Is it not my intention to justify the narrow national prejudices, which are not less common here, than in other parts of the world. There may be climes more favored than our own, and people more enlightened, more courteous, and more honest than ourselves: but whilst we are willing to allow this, and every candid man ought to allow it, if it is true, — we should still love our country more than any other, as we love our own children in the highest degree, though they may be less accomplished than the children of our neighbors. As however it is the duty of a parent to correct the faults, and to improve the virtues of his children, so ought we to conduct ourselves toward our country: whatever is mean, fraudulent, or vicious, in the principles and habits of our fellow citizens, we should reform as far as we can, by our exhortations, and in particular by our example.

2. A second observation is, that it is the duty of every citizen to support the constitution, to be a good subject of the government, to give all due respect to the rulers and magistrates, and to obey the laws which are enacted by legislative authority. This obligation is universal in its extent, as we are bound to obey the laws, which we dislike, as well as the laws, which we approve.

Respecting these two duties there is no dispute ; they are maintained by all parties among us, however widely they may differ on other points ; and when a man violates either of them, he is condemned by the general opinion of his fellow citizens.

3. The truth of a third observation, which I shall make, is perhaps not so obvious at first sight ; but it appears to me equally certain : it is this, that it is the duty of every person, under such a government as ours, to give his vote on all occasions, in which he is authorized or qualified for the act. The theory of our government is, that all power is derived from the people : they appoint, either mediately or immediately, every officer from the highest to the lowest. As it is the duty of them, who are appointed, to discharge with diligence and fidelity their several obligations ; so it is not less the duty of every qualified voter to perform the part assigned to him, which is to attend the elections. For should a large number of the citizens neglect it, — and one man has as much right to neglect it as another, — the persons chosen, though the legal, may not be the true, representatives of the people, and ordinances may be established, which are opposed to the public sentiment.

I am aware that they, who are accustomed to this neglect, justify it by several reasons.—One which is urged by industrious citizens, is, that the duties of their profession require all their time, and they conceive that they benefit their country more, by attending with diligence to their several callings, than by intermeddling with public affairs. In answer to this objection it may be said, that all, which is demanded of any voter, is to give to elections a few hours of a small number of days in a year. It may also be said, that the industrious are generally the most judicious, sober, and orderly members of the community. They ought therefore to attend elections, which otherwise might be conducted by the idle.

Another objection is, that although it is the theory of our government, that all power is derived from the whole body of the people, yet that the fact is different : because nominations are, and from the nature of things, must of necessity be, previously made by men, who either with, or without, right and reason, take this part on them ; consequently all that any citizen can do is to give either his affirmative or negative to such nomination, without being able in many instances to vote for a person, whom he judges the best qualified for the proposed office ; and that his power is of so little value, that it is not worth exercising. — This objection, it must be acknowledged, is of weight ; but in answer to it I would say, that if the fact, on which it is founded, is an evil, it is an evil, which admits of no remedy. If every person in the community, without regard to a previous nomination, should vote only for the man, who in his opinion would fill an office with the most wisdom and dignity, there are few cases in which an election could take



place : for our judgments on human characters are as various, as our taste, our prejudices, our sympathies, and our aversions. Because we cannot exert all the power, which we desire, it does not follow that we ought not to use the power, which we possess. Besides it may be observed, that this evil is not worse than others which exist in society, but of which no reasonable person ever thinks of complaining. In many important elections, which we are called upon to make, and in which our usefulness and happiness are involved, we are seldom allowed to do anything more, than to give an affirmative or negative. If these restrictions are submitted to with patience, no evil, which resembles them, should be borne with equal resignation.

4. Another objection against attending elections, which is alleged by several peaceable and worthy men, is, that the republic is divided into parties, both of whom are influenced by so many prejudices, that they do not think themselves under obligations to vote with either of them. An important question therefore arises here : what is the duty of a good citizen in this respect ; and when parties exist in a nation, is it wrong to choose a side ? It is well known to all, who are acquainted with history, that freedom and a party spirit are inseparably connected : that is, in every nation, where the people are allowed to speak and act as they please, one part of them has always chosen to speak and act differently from the other part. For this evil, if it is an evil, there is no other cure than despotism. Our own country, which from its first settlement to the present moment has, with the exception of a few intervals, enjoyed a large share of liberty, has never been exempt from these divisions. At this time

in particular, the two divisions of the nation are distinctly marked; and there are few among us, who, when they vote, do not vote with a party.

There are many good citizens, who, possessing little knowledge of human nature, say that this is wrong. They assert, that men ought to be all of one mind; that they ought to pursue the welfare of their country, and as there is but one way of rendering it prosperous, that there should be no disagreement respecting the means: that as there is only one true religion, so there is only one true system of politics; and that they, who oppose it, are either wilfully blind, or are influenced by corrupt motives. A party spirit, according to them, is an evil, which would not exist, if men would think and choose what is right, if they would think and choose the same thing. This mode of reasoning has great weight in the minds of many well meaning persons of opposite political sentiments; and they yield to its consequences. One class of politicians in the state is, they believe, friendly, and another hostile, to the interest of their country. They join themselves to the former, the wise and upright leaders, and with zeal and courage support their principles and measures; but the divisions, which they lament, still exist; for the light of truth, which they maintain shines on all, is not seen by a great number of citizens, who are as honest and clear-sighted as themselves.

There are other citizens more enlightened, who do not entertain so exalted an opinion of the infallibility of their own judgments. They suppose that many political propositions are probable, but not demonstrable. Difficulties may be raised, and plausible objections may be urged, which embarrass a subject, and prevent the mind

from being fully satisfied. They perceive however, that there is a balance of arguments in their favor, and it induces them to give their assent; and they choose and act with as much decision, as if they were guided by the most absolute certainty. For they are aware that there is nothing peculiar in the case, as in innumerable other instances they have no light to direct their steps, except probability. These persons are more moderate than the first mentioned; but they are not less disposed than they to take a side. They join themselves to the party of leading politicians, whom on the whole they believe to be right, and who, in their opinion the most frequently pursue the true interest of the country; without pretending that their friends always conduct themselves with perfect discretion, or that the opposite party is always in the wrong, and that its measures are always pernicious.

There are other citizens, whose minds are so weak and volatile, that they are incapable of remaining long fixed in any sentiment. They wander from opinion to opinion, being influenced by the last impression received, from the conversation which they have heard, or the book which they have read. Candor is the virtue, to which they lay claim; but their candor has no other foundation than inconstancy of heart and imbecility of understanding.

There are other citizens, who also properly belong to neither party; for, governed by no other motive than self-interest, they take their stand on the confines of both, where with a single step they can join themselves to the side, that proves to be the strongest.

If therefore the question is again asked, whether a citizen ought to join himself to a party, and remain faithful to it? the just answer seems to be, that the honest and

the wise will generally do so, and that the neutrals are chiefly to be found among the weak and the selfish. I mean not to assert, that a man may not conscientiously alter his system of politics, when he is convinced by, what appear to him, weighty arguments: I believe he may as honestly do it, as he may change his religion, when truths, which were formerly unknown, are opened to his mind. Nor do I say, that *every* wise and honest man will necessarily take a side; for there are persons of this character, who from various causes have never attended to the subject: but this observation I would make, that every man, who thinks on the matter, will incline to the one party or the other; because it is nearly impossible that two opposite propositions should be presented in such a light to the human understanding, that it should discern no preference between them. Still less do I affirm, that there are not a few persons, who have attained such heights of philosophy and devotion, that they soar above all sublunary objects, and who, having on the wings of contemplation approached near the throne of God, look down on the contests of politicians as on the disputes of children. But as the weak and volatile, whom I have described before, are less, so these men are more, than human: the minds, that are necessarily occupied with the ordinary concerns of life, cannot imitate them, and follow them in their sublime contemplations.

5. As the inhabitants of every free country are divided into parties, an important inquiry arises: by what means should a citizen support the cause, which he has adopted; and in what manner ought he to treat his opponents? The general answer to this inquiry is, that

every citizen is bound to conduct himself with sincerity and veracity, with good humor and candor, in a word, like a man of honor and benevolence. No rancor should be felt or expressed. Whilst we boast that in religion unbounded toleration exists, that every man is allowed to worship God according to his conscience, we should be equally tolerant in politics. We should not molest or censure our fellow citizens, when they are exercising the privileges, which of right belong to them; but we should permit them to vote as they please, and to follow what leaders they please.

They, who differ from each other in politics, ought to remember that they are men, and have the same common nature: that they are generally Christians, and have the same religion: and that they are citizens of the same republic, and have the same common country: consequently that there are more ties to unite them, than causes to divide their affections. These motives should inspire their minds with forbearance toward each other, with respect and kindness. After employing all proper means to attain their end, the minority ought to submit with a good grace to the decision of the majority, not impeding the wheels of government by any factious opposition. On the other hand, the majority ought to use with moderation the ascendancy, which they have gained, without displaying the insolence and spirit of persecution, which are too apt to characterize a triumphant party. This conduct is enjoined by good policy, not less than by reason and justice: because events, which in a free country depend on the breath of the people, are so uncertain, that the party reigning to-day, may tomorrow be deprived of all power. In the course of forty years we have seen more than one change take

place. Judging therefore from experience, we may with a high degree of probability expect, that the public sentiment will in future be equally variable.

6. Another inquiry of importance is, what measures may be lawfully used to displace rulers, whom we disapprove? The most ready answer, which can be given to this question, is, that when the period of election returns, we have nothing to do, but silently to vote against them. The general practice however extends further; and if it did not, no person, however ignorant or corrupt, could often be removed from office; because a mere silent vote produces little effect. Many therefore who have learned the use of the pen, undertake to write on the subject; and many, who have not acquired this art, indulge themselves with freedom in uttering their objections. This is the custom of both parties. I presume not to decide which party exceeds in severity; nor whether either of them has cause to boast of peculiar candor. The fact is, that great abuses have taken place, and that, without any benefit to the community, wounds have been wantonly and cruelly inflicted on individuals. But because the privilege has been abused, it is not less true, that it is the right and duty of an enlightened citizen to point out the ignorance, errors, and vices of public characters. This act of justice he ought to perform, provided he in his conscience believes, that the general interest is suffering under the reign of folly and corruption. Admitting it to be right, there are moral rules, by which he ought to be restrained in the exercise of the privilege. The truth should be published, and not every unfavorable truth, but the truth only, which is necessary for the purpose. Nothing slanderous

or dishonorable should be expressed : nor should he scatter the cheap waters of ridicule and contempt, which are crimes, when they are thrown on men of exalted stations. An energetic style of eloquence may indeed be lawfully employed : because a simple exposure of imbecility and wickedness will make little impression on the public mind, unless the just arguments, which are alleged, are enforced with animated language.

7. I will only add, that we ought to contemplate the events, which take place in our land, and the conflicts of the parties existing among us, with the eye of Christians. There are seasons when, in turn, the members of each of the parties, who equally profess to love their country, are ready to despair, because the measures which they approve, do not succeed : but the remembrance, that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, that his wisdom is not inferior to his power, and that he governs the world in the best possible manner, should banish from their bosoms every despondent feeling. As Christians they should submit to what is ordained by so benevolent a Being, satisfied that he will bring good out of what appears to be evil. There were many, who forgetting the lessons, which history furnishes, fondly hoped, that after we had vindicated our rights and established our independence, the inhabitants of this country would be distinguished, not more by their prosperity, than by the practice of every virtue, which adorns a nation ; that patriotism, the love of order, obedience to good government, sobriety, economy, industry and mutual toleration would generally prevail. But the experience of a few years must have convinced them that as to mutual toleration these were romantic expectations : for instead



of the affection and good offices, which fellow citizens owe to each other, they too frequently behold the spirit of political persecution. A man of reflection will conclude from what he observes, that this sublunary scene is not intended for a state of perfection. He will take therefore the world as he finds it ; without immoderately lamenting evils, which he cannot cure, he will submit with as much patience as he can acquire, to the course of events ; and if he can do no more, he will exert all his powers for the correction of his own heart and the improvement of his own character. In the meantime, whilst he fervently and devoutly prays for the peace of his country, he will be grateful for the blessings, which Heaven bestows on him. He will thank God, that he is placed in a region, which produces in abundance all the necessities and comforts of life. He will thank his everlasting Friend for his personal and domestic pleasures. He will rejoice in divine goodness, that he has the happiness of knowing, and admiring, and loving many, whose understandings are illuminated by wisdom, and whose hearts are adorned with virtue and piety. He will thank the Governor of the universe for bestowing on his country freedom and independence. He will, in particular, acknowledge the manifold grace of his heavenly Father for revealing to him the light of the gospel, and for inspiring his mind with the hope, that an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, will succeed this state of inconstancy and imperfection.

Thanksgiving Day. 1st Thursday in Dec.



## SERMON XXVII.

THE CHARACTER OF JUDGE MINOT.

---

PSALMS XVI. 3.

THE EXCELLENT, IN WHOM IS ALL MY DELIGHT.

VARIOUS objects of beauty are presented to the eye, to the ear, and to the mind, in the works of nature and art. Sweet are the sounds, when soft music steals on the awakened ear. Magnificent is the view of a well proportioned edifice, in which the skill of the architect is displayed. Beautiful is the form of many of the inferior animals ; and still more beautiful is the human form, when it approaches that perfection, which the imagination is fond of painting : the tall and erect stature ; the harmonious limbs ; the high and open forehead ; the eloquent eye ; the sublime countenance ; the air of grace and dignity, impressed on every feature and displayed in every motion. But the most delightful object, which this world affords, is the man, whose mind is illuminated with wisdom, and ornamented with virtue. We contemplate his character with ineffable satisfaction ; we are charmed with the excellence of his example ; and we feel an impression far transcending that, which inanimate objects are capable of exciting ; for our bosoms are filled not only with admiration, but with love.

Such a man has lately lived among us ; and if the tears of his friends and the prayers of his fellow citizens could have saved him from death, he would still live to bless his family and to adorn his country.

I purpose to exhibit to your view the character of this man ; and I will endeavor to speak of him, not with the exaggeration of friendship, but with the impartiality of truth.

As the virtues of George Richards Minot were the fruits of early cultivation, in delineating his character, it is necessary to begin with the period of infancy. The youngest child of respectable parents, and descended from a line of honorable ancestors, he was born under auspicious circumstances.\* He was so happy as to experience the peculiar tenderness, with which the youngest child is treated in affectionate families. From the beginning of his life he was an object, who employed the care and engaged the hearts of his numerous relatives. On a mind naturally good, kindness had the best effects ; and the love, which he received from all who surrounded him, early moulded his heart to that benevolence, which formed so distinguishing a part of his character during every period of his life.

In the ninth year of his age he was admitted into the South Latin School of Boston, at that time under the superintendence of Mr Lovell, a gentleman of classical knowledge and exquisite taste. As I was always convinced that this eminent instructor had a large share in forming the character of our friend, I enjoy a melancholy satisfaction in mentioning his name, and in paying the tribute of grateful respect to his memory.

\* He was born in Boston, Dec. 22d, 1758, and was the youngest of ten children.

In this seminary young Minot was soon distinguished for his diligence in study, his kindness to his school-fellows, and his respect to the masters. There were contracted his earliest friendships, which were not forgotten by him till the last moment of his life. Long before his literary course was completed, he was known to be the favorite of his instructor ; but as every boy loved him for his modesty and amiable manners, and was besides convinced of his superior claims to distinction, which had not been obtained by the practice of any dishonorable arts, no envy was excited.

This notice led him to be watchful of his conduct, that he might not lose the esteem, which he had happily acquired. Discretion marked his whole deportment ; and even at that age there was a decorum, and I may almost say a dignity, in his behaviour, which were uncommon for his years.

When the important moment approached, in which he was to leave school, he was not only called upon by his master to compose his own oration, a task which at that time was seldom or never executed by a boy himself, and which he actually performed, but he was also enjoined to assist more than one of his classmates in the same work.

These circumstances, on which I dwell, because I suppose that they are not now generally known, contributed to form his character : and there were several other causes, which conduced to the same end. Among them might be particularly mentioned the liberal education of his father, who attended in part to his instruction at home, and who allowing no more moments for recreation, than those which were absolutely necessary for the preservation of his health, kept him employed the rest

of his time either in study or business : — the mild and affectionate demeanor of an excellent mother, who cultivated with assiduity his amiable heart ; — but above all the example of an elder brother, Francis Minot, a gentleman of great purity and elevation of sentiment. This model of everything which was worthy was constantly before his eyes ; and his highest ambition was to copy into his own character the traits, which rendered his brother the object of the veneration and love of all who knew him. It would have contributed greatly to his peace of mind, if he had not been deprived of this brother at an early age : \* but death had not power to destroy the effect of the example ; for whilst with fondness he cherished the remembrance of departed virtue, its image was present to his heart, to inspire him with fortitude against temptation.

By these and other causes the character of young Minot was in a great measure established, even before he left school. He had already acquired the habits of diligence and sobriety, of benevolence to his equals and respect to his superiors, of the love of learning, of self-command, and of magnanimity of sentiment. The principal enemy, with which he had to contend, was a temper by nature irascible. This part of his mental constitution was known to few of his friends ; perhaps to none of them, except from his own confession ; for before this period the enemy was subdued ; and the ardor, which was still left in his mind, served only to give warmth to his heart and fire to his genius.

The youth of Mr Minot commenced with his admis-

\* Francis Minot died Dec. 1774.

sion into college ; \* and his conduct there was a continuation of the same virtues, which he had practised at school. The love of learning, graceful modesty, amiable manners, and goodness of heart still distinguished him. He now began to cultivate those branches of literature, which chiefly engaged his attention during the remainder of his life : history and belles lettres. To these objects he devoted a great portion of his time, reading with uncommon care and diligence the best authors that he could procure. By this study his mind was stored with facts, and his taste and style were gradually formed. — The two books which were his most admired models, were the History of Charles the Fifth, and the historical part of the Annual Register.

But from no source whatever did he derive more advantage in the cultivation of his talents, than from the conversation of several young men at that time members of the university, who even then gave presages of future eminence, and now in manhood occupy some of the most important stations in society. These generous youth, courted his acquaintance : and several of them formed with him those firm bonds of friendship, which death itself has not power to loosen.

On a theatre, where the passions which agitate mankind appear in miniature, but as ardent as on the great theatre of the world ; where the competition of rivals excites envy and ill will ; where sloth endeavors to undermine the reputation, which it cannot hope to equal ; where the licentious are constantly attempting to arrest the progress of the diligent ; where the baits of temptation are thrown in the way of the chaste and temperate ;

— on this theatre Mr Minot appeared with his usual discretion. He preserved the purity of his morals: he suffered no temptation to undermine his virtue; he received the highest honors, which his superiors could confer on him; but not a murmur was heard, not a sound of disapprobation was uttered by any of his companions. Such is the force of superior merit; and so difficult was it to be envious of the youth, who loved every one, and who covered all his talents with the veil of modesty.

Thus happy in the affection of his equals, he was not less esteemed by the governors of the university. The college was at that time favored with several instructors, who were loved by the students in general. One of them was the enlightened Wadsworth. He was a man of eminent talents, of clear conceptions, a perspicacious reasoner, fluent in speech, and above all, mild in the exercise of authority. In the midst of his usefulness he was snatched from the university by a fatal disease.\* The bosoms of the students were filled with consternation. “What honors shall we pay to the memory of so beloved a tutor?” They address the governors of the college:—“Do not, by appointing one of your own body, deprive us of the melancholy satisfaction of pronouncing his panegyric. Let one of our number be the organ of the rest, and speak the grateful sentiments of our hearts.” The request was granted and Mr Minot was selected to deliver the funeral oration. With what

\* John Wadsworth, during seven years was a tutor of Harvard University, died July 12th, 1777. So affectionately was he remembered by his contemporary friends and by the pupils, who had enjoyed the benefit of his instructions, that twentyfive years after his death, they erected a monument to his memory.

pathos and eloquence he performed the duty, his contemporaries well remember. They never can forget his impassioned tones, the dark sorrow which clouded his own brow, and the grief which filled the breasts of all his hearers. This oration established his reputation; and henceforward his classmates were eager to confer on him every honor, which it was in their power to bestow.

He left college,\* and entered on the study of law, under the Hon. William Tudor, a gentleman for whom he had a high esteem and friendship, which were warmly returned. In the office of this respected master he enjoyed the advantage of being the fellow student of Fisher Ames. It was there that his own genius caught fire from the flame, which burned so intensely in the imagination of his friend. Fisher Ames at that time was little known to the world; but Minot had a perfect comprehension of his talents. He never spoke of them without enthusiasm; and he was often heard to predict the splendid reputation, which this powerful orator and enlightened statesman would in future acquire.

His legal studies were completed not long after the time, in which he took his second degree. The university, which had been depressed by the war of the Revolution, was beginning to revive: and public commencements, which had been discontinued during several years, were again introduced. On this occasion he was appointed to deliver the valedictory oration; a part which is usually assigned to the best scholars, to scholars, who are not only eloquent, but learned. The brilliancy of his diction in this performance, his speaking eye, the dig-

\* July, 1778.

nity of his air, and his graceful gestures are still impressed on the memories of those who were present.

He was now leaving the period of youth, and entering on that of manhood ; and he was introduced on this third stage of life with the reputation of a correct and elegant scholar, a polished gentleman, a man of purity, benevolence and religion. The most important part of his existence was passed, in which he had established his character, fixed his principles, and formed his habits. What for the future principally remained for him, was to gather the fruits of his labors ; to cultivate the flowers of classical literature, which he had with such assiduity and success planted in his mind ; to benefit his fellow citizens by his exertions ; and to enjoy the society of the friends, whose hearts he had gained by his talents and virtues.

As the design of this discourse is not merely to praise the dead, but to instruct the living, I pause here to observe, that the review of the life of Mr Minot thus far teaches important lessons, which I wish it was in my power to stamp so deeply on the hearts of all who hear me, that the impression should never be erased.

I address you, children, who are longing for the time when you shall grow up to be men : Is not Mr Minot such a man as you desire to become ; a man, whom everybody loved ; a man, who was as cheerful as yourselves ; and who, whilst he was respected by the old, was always the delight of little children ? What was it that made this charming man ? It was his good behaviour in childhood ; his duty to his parents, his obedience to his masters ; his diligence at school, where he always



mind his books ; and his love for his school fellows, who will never forget his kindness to them as long as they live.

I address you, young men, whose bosoms are filled with generous purposes and ardent hopes : Are you not ambitious of imitating this excellent model ? What sacrifices would you not make, and to what severe labors would you not submit, if they would render you such a man, as Mr Minot was at the age of twenty-two ; the polite scholar and gentleman, the joy of every circle in which he appeared ? But the brilliant flowers, which adorned his manners and mind, were not produced without industrious cultivation.

I address you, young men, who are immersed in sloth and brutal pleasures, and who extinguish in the muddy waters of intemperance the sparks, which might enkindle your genius : Contemplate the example of the man, whom I exhibit to your view, entering on the theatre of the world with the fairest prospects of benefiting the public, and of doing honor to himself. “ But was not his youth, you demand, consumed in painful toil, and in mortifying self-denial ? Was not his time employed in a tedious round of sober duties, without one enlivening draught of pleasure to cheer his spirits ? Did he not miss the joys, for which youth is formed, and of which it has a right to partake ? In fine, was he happy ? For of what value is reputation ; of what value are talents ; of what value is even virtue, if happiness is the price, which must be paid for their acquisition ?” Was he happy ? Ask the friends, who best knew him, and they will tell you, that though in addition to the painful labors, to which he voluntarily submitted, his delicate constitution subjected him in childhood and youth to fre-

quent maladies ; and though his uncommonly sensible heart was more than once wounded by the loss of a beloved brother ; yet never was there a more cheerful and contented mind. Good humor flowed through his soul in a perpetual stream. His conversation, when he was young, was always animated, gay, and sprightly. Was he happy ? If you had ever seen him in his youth you would not ask the question. It was impossible that a young man with such a face, which was constantly irradiated with the sunshine of peace ; it was impossible that such a man should not be happy. There were never beheld in him that sullen brow, those haggard looks, that grin of discontent, that air of debauchery and blasphemy, with which the libertine is so often disfigured. He tasted pleasure ; but it was pleasure which was not followed by the pangs of remorse. He tasted pleasure ; but it was pleasure which qualified him for the severer duties of life, which fortified his powers, and ennobled his heart.

I address you, parents ; and I ask you, whether it is not the desire of your hearts to possess such a son, as the man whose character I am describing ? If you are so happy as to have children, who are still near the beginning of life, this blessing depends in a great measure on your own vigilance and exertions. If you wish that your sons should attain eminence and virtue in manhood, keep them, when they are young, constantly employed in that which is useful. Make them as happy as is in your power ; but suffer them not to be idle ; and explode the pernicious maxim, which has ruined many a youth, that it is proper a young man should be gay, that is, licentious. Never be so rash, as to express it in the presence of your children. The example of our departed friend

teaches, and innumerable other instances inculcate the same truth, that such as we are in youth, such also are we in manhood. If the first part of life is passed in sloth and vice, the middle of life will be contemptible, and old age wretched. Vice, it is confessed, in a few extraordinary instances has been cured, and good habits acquired even at an advanced period : but if knowledge is not cultivated in youth, there is no remedy. Ignorance and insignificance are the portion of those who neglect their studies in schools and colleges. A tree, which has produced no blossoms in spring, will bear no fruit in autumn : nor will they, who have passed their youth in idleness, become wise and learned in manhood.

But it is time to leave reflections, and to return to the delineation of the character, which has occasioned them. Mr Minot had been hitherto engaged in preparing himself for the discharge of the duties, which a citizen owes to society : he was now to enter on their actual performance. The path, which was obviously pointed out to him, was to commence the practice of the liberal profession, the rudiments of which he had spent several years in studying ; but a circumstance, which may be regarded as beneficial to the public, and which eventually proved fortunate to himself, prevented him from devoting to it his whole attention. The new constitution of Massachusetts had just begun its operation ; and there was wanted for the house of representatives a clerk, who would do honor to a place, which under the provincial government had frequently been occupied by men of celebrity and talents. He was appointed to the office ;\*

\* In the year 1781.

and with his accustomed prudence accepted it thankfully. With what propriety and fidelity he discharged the obligations, which he had taken on him, is well known to all the members of the legislature, particularly to the able speakers,\* who presided in the house during that period. The records were kept with remarkable care; and through the obliging assistance afforded by him to several worthy gentlemen, who, from the want of education, were not able to express their ideas in proper terms, a precision and neatness marked many of the votes and resolves, in which his accurate pen could easily be traced. I mention this without hesitation, because it has been often gratefully acknowledged by those who received his aid.

Being the clerk of the representatives at the time, when the causes, which finally produced the insurrection in Massachusetts, were in operation, he had an opportunity of being well acquainted with the debates and proceedings of the house, which were uncommonly interesting to the public. Of these transactions he undertook to write a sketch, which was communicated through the channel of the *Boston Magazine*,† and continued monthly, as long as that miscellany was kept alive.‡ In this production, which was universally applauded for its correctness and impartiality, he is generally supposed to have happily imitated the style, which he so much admired.

At length, when the insurrection had distracted the heads and embittered the hearts of a portion of the peo-

\* Messrs Dalton, Gorham, Warren, Sedgwick, and Cobb.

† For 1784 and 1785.

‡ He also published in the same Magazine several essays on literary subjects.

ple, and had been successfully quelled by the patriotism and fortitude of a majority of the citizens, he executed a work of still greater importance: a faithful history of the whole transaction. By this composition, which was equally praised, for its truth, moderation, lucid order, and elegance of language, he became entitled to a high rank among the American authors.

The insurrection of Massachusetts was one of the causes, which led to the formation of the constitution of the United States. Of the convention, which was chosen to consider it in this commonwealth, he was appointed the secretary. In this situation he gained many new friends, and his character and talents were further made known to the public.

When therefore, in the course of years, the office of judge of probate for the county of Suffolk became vacant, all eyes were fixed on him, as the proper person to succeed to that important station; and to the universal joy of his fellow citizens, he was nominated by the governor and approved by the council.\* He had now gained the place, for which his Maker had formed him. The faithfulness and impartiality, the uprightness, the patience, and humanity of Judge Minot will long be remembered. Whilst he lay on his death-bed, fervent prayers were made by the public, that God would have pity on them and spare the life of their wise and beloved magistrate. The prayer was rejected; and they must submit to the will of Heaven, which is always right; but the Supreme Being does not forbid them to bewail their loss. They can never forget it; and often will the afflicted, whilst they weep over the grave of a deceased husband and

\* Jan. 1792.

father, drop a tear to the memory of the man, who was the friend of the widow and orphan.

The other public offices bestowed on him are so recent in the remembrance of all who hear me, that they need not be particularly mentioned. Should I attempt to describe the manner in which he sustained them, I could only repeat the encomiums, which have already been bestowed on the dignity of his deportment, his wisdom, his integrity, and philanthropy.

Amidst his numerous public avocations, he found time to search into the archives of his country, and to write a history of Massachusetts, beginning at the period where Hutchinson leaves it. Of this useful work one volume has already been presented to the world; and a second volume would have been completed, if the health and life of the author had been spared one month longer. It is hoped that from want of encouragement of the patrons of literature, the part which he had finished will not be lost to the public.\*

Whilst he devoted his time and talents to the service of his fellow citizens, their grateful approbation attended his steps. Literary institutions imparted to him the honors of their fellowship;† philanthropic incorporations bestowed on him the marks of their esteem. Of the Charitable Fire Society he was elected the presi-

\* This second volume was published in 1803.

† He was a fellow of the American Academy, and a member of the Humane, the Historical, and several other Societies. He was one of the editors of the First, the Fourth, and the Sixth volumes of the Collections of the Historical Society: and the papers collected by him, about twenty in number, are important to the historian of Massachusetts.

dent; and from the commencement of that association, he was one of the most active springs, which put in motion its benevolent operations. Its respected members lament his death with warm affection. They cherish the remembrance of the mild dignity, with which he presided in their meetings; and deeply impressed on their hearts are the precepts of charity, which with so much pathos and eloquence he taught them in his admired Address.\*

His fellow citizens in general, on more than one occasion, testified the confidence, which they felt in his abilities and moderation.† He was the man, on whom the eyes of all parties were fixed, to express the grief, with which the hearts of all parties were pierced by the death of the beloved Washington. As the virtuous, however differing in rank and external acts, belong to the same family, and a kindred likeness may be traced in the features of their minds, in delineating the character of the first of men, he could not avoid describing in part his own correct example. The resemblance is so striking, that it has been perceived by many.

Fame and public confidence were not the only rewards of his merit: through the liberal and grateful aid of the government and of his fellow citizens, prosperity smiled on him. This enlarged his power of doing good and of communicating pleasure: his friends were welcomed with ardor to his hospitable board; and his bounty flowed in copious streams on those who asked or needed his assistance.

\* Delivered May 29, 1795, and soon after published by the Society.

† His first publication was an oration, delivered at the request of the inhabitants of Boston, on the 5th of March, 1782.



Such was the life, such the honors, and such the prosperity of Judge Minot. You love the man, who excelled in so many virtues ; and you rejoice in the favors with which Heaven visited his mansion. Will you permit me to make him still further known to you, and to delineate parts of his character, which have not already been portrayed ? It is not my intention to exhaust the subject : many of his friends are eager to praise him : and I ought to leave for them features of his character, which they can particularly describe.\* I shall suppress therefore the greatest part of the thoughts, which crowd on my mind. The understanding of Judge Minot possessed an astonishing variety. They, who were the longest acquainted with him, can say that there was always a novelty in his conversation, either as to substance or form. This effect arose from his great industry and inquisitiveness ; in consequence of which he was every day increasing in learning and taste. When he was visited by his friends, he appeared to express his best ideas in his best manner ; but before there was an opportunity of seeing him again, he had obtained the knowledge of a new fact, or had acquired a new grace of expression. This novelty and variety, in addition to the sprightly sallies of wit, which frequently burst from his lips, the benignity, the gentle radiance, the mind and character, which shone in his face, rendered him a most interesting and pleasant companion.

In his company every one felt himself at perfect ease ;

\* Among the eulogies on the character of Judge Minot, which have been published since the delivery of this discourse, ought to be particularly mentioned the Oration of the Hon. John Quincy Adaras, pronounced May 25th, 1802, and the Memoir by Dr Eliot in the New England Biography.



for he never engrossed the conversation to himself, and oppressed the ear with a long harangue. He listened as well as spoke : and every one fancied himself wiser, not only from what he learned at the moment, but also from the stores of information treasured up in his own mind, and of the possession of which he was before hardly conscious. For our friend had the happy talent of uncovering the knowledge, which was veiled by diffidence, and of drawing out in correct and elegant language the conceptions of those, who from want of use had not learned the art of speaking, or of speaking in proper terms. This talent rendered him the delight of ingenuous young men, who sometimes have this defect, and who by that means miss the reputation, to which they are entitled by their science and good sense.

In judging of his own powers, his opinion was guided by modesty ; but he possessed none of that bashfulness, which quenches emulation and annihilates exertion. He doubted whether he was capable of performing some things, for which his friends thought him well qualified ; but he yielded to their persuasions, and made the attempt ; and he generally succeeded better than his fears had anticipated. Without sitting still and idly wishing for fame, he entered the career of glory, and ran for the prize, assured that if he missed it, he at least deserved applause for his well directed labors.

In judging of the characters and abilities of others, he was eminently candid. His opinion was, that few men are so vicious as not to have something good in them ; or so ignorant, as not to have acquired some valuable branch of science or art. For these qualities he praised them : but never for talents and virtues, to which they had not a title. He was candid : but abhorrent to his

feelings was that counterfeit candor, which applauds equally the saint and the sinner. He has often been heard to speak with indignation against the artful and dishonest, particularly against false patriots and political impostors.

As a politician his moderation is well known, and has often been the subject of encomium. He wished well to both the parties, into which the state is divided : both parties would have been happy to have called him their own ; but as he never concealed or disguised his sentiments, it is certain that he belonged to one only. Without denominating it by any honorable title, it will be sufficiently described by saying, that it is the party, of which the respected Bowdoin was the head, which placed in the chair of government the much lamented Sumner, and which supported the administration of the late president of the United States. I ascribe no merit to him for his opinions ; but for his firmness and independence of spirit he deserved the highest applause.

He was as candid, zealous, and honest in his religious, as in his political opinions. On all proper occasions he openly declared what he believed ; but the truth is, that he laid little stress on the dogmas of any particular sect, paying more attention to the duties than to the speculations of Christians. Humble and devout, he loved God, and trusted entirely to his mercy for salvation. He complied with all the rites and ordinances of Christianity ; and though he was persuaded that these practices are not the most essential parts of religion ; yet he felt it to be his duty publicly to manifest before all who observed his conduct, that he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

In private and domestic life his conduct was exhibited

to great advantage. At an early age he was united to the woman whom he loved ; and he loved her as long as consciousness remained. Satisfied with the warmth of her affection, and with the respect and tenderness of his own, and of his adopted children, his happiest hours were passed in the bosom of his family. There was he often seen, by the friends who were admitted to join the harmonious circle, smiling with complacency on all around him, and imparting delight to every breast.

If I should more particularly describe these endearing scenes, I should only aggravate the sorrow, which it is my desire to soften. For never more will his wife, his children, his venerable parent, his fond brothers, his disconsolate nephew, his grateful nieces, behold his benign face ; never will they listen to his voice of love : “ cold he now lies in the grave below ; ” his warm heart has ceased to beat ; \* and all their joys are remembered as a dream.

Whilst we sympathize in their affliction, we implore the best of Beings to have pity on them. On her, who stands preëminent in wo, every compassionate eye is affectionately turned. May he, who has power to make whole, pour the balm of consolation into her mind : may she find peace in that religion, which she has so long professed. Happily for her she is a Christian ; and she believes that a time will come, when the dead at the voice of Jesus will burst the bars of the tomb, and enter on a state where sorrow will forever cease, and where she will again behold the face, and be happy in the society, of the man whom she loves.

\* Judge Minot died Jan. 2d, 1802.

His son! — May God Almighty calm his distracted heart. May the image of his father's virtues and the lustre of his example be constantly present to his soul.

His daughter — an infant, but not too young to feel her loss! — May the Father of the fatherless wipe away her tears, and mould her tender heart to the mild and amiable virtues, which adorned her parent.

The many throbbing bosoms and swollen eyes, which I behold in the house of mourning, remind me of other affectionate relatives. Can they forbear to lament the loss of such a son, such a brother, such a protector?

You, his friends, who learned to love him, when your hearts glowed with the fire of youth, have lost an object of your affection, who can never be replaced. You have now attained the summit of life, and contemplate the descent before you with melancholy thoughts. Youth cannot return; the heart cannot easily receive new impressions of friendship. The props, which support the soul, have been removed one after another; and soon none will be left, on which it can rest. The spotless Appleton, the amiable Clarke, have already been taken away; and now the loved form of Minot is levelled with the dust. Whose turn it will be next, God only knows. Though the love of life still clings to you, yet such is your enthusiastic affection for this incomparable friend, that you are ready to cry out, I am distressed for thee, my brother: would to God I had died for thee. for thy love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of all other friends.

S. after the Funeral of the Hon. George Richards Minot.

\* \* In the session of the legislature, which succeeded the death of Judge Minot, as a tribute of respect to his memory, and in grateful remembrance of the services which he had performed to the government, a town in the District of Maine was incorporated with his name, and it is now one of the most respectable in the County of Cumberland.

# SERMON XXVIII.

THE CHARACTER OF DR HOWARD.

---

LUKE XXIII. 50.

HE WAS A GOOD MAN AND A JUST.

THE words which I have read remind you of the pious and virtuous Dr Howard, whose obsequies we attended in the past week. As he was greatly beloved by the members of this congregation, I cannot suffer the event to pass, without manifesting that I am interested in it. His character has already been delineated by a venerable friend;\* but you would not excuse me, if I did not present him to your view in the light, in which I have been accustomed to consider him.

The distinguishing feature of Dr Howard's character was good sense. He thought with accuracy and reasoned with clearness. This was the style of his public discourses which were always solid and judicious. As he was not gifted by nature with a mellow and harmonious voice, as there was no frenzy in his eye, no enthusiasm in his heart or head, and as his modesty prevented him from having any confidence in his own elocution,

\* President Willard.

he did not aim at, nor did he acquire, the reputation of a popular preacher. But there was not anything offensive in his delivery, artificial and disgusting in his tones ; his emphasis, though not forcible, was just ; and there was such perspicuity in his language, so much novelty or importance in his ideas, that he seldom failed to command the attention of an auditory.

Is not such a mode of preaching, on the whole, the most useful ? The admirers of eloquence, who go to a church as to a theatre, for the sake of having their passions moved, and who think that a sermon is not good, unless it inspires them either with pity or terror, will condemn the discourses of Dr Howard as cold and uninteresting ; but when it is considered of what materials Christian congregations are composed, this censure will appear unjust. The hearers, who attend public worship, are commonly the most decent and virtuous part of the community. They are parents, who lead to the house of God their children, who have been trained up in the habits of order and decorum. It is the duty of a minister to confirm such persons in the good practices, which they have already learned, to exhort them to persevere in them, and daily to make new improvements in virtue ; to instruct the young in the obligations, with which, from their want of years and experience, they are not yet acquainted, and to point out to them the danger of yielding to temptation ; to fill the minds of the hearers in general with adoration and gratitude to God, the author of every perfect gift, and with respect and affection to Jesus, through whom we receive the Christian religion ; and to warn all to prepare themselves for death, to avoid the punishments, and to qualify themselves for the happiness, of a future world. These are important and in-

interesting themes: but to display them with advantage, it is not necessary to have recourse to the language of passion or vehement gesticulation.

A different sentiment, it is confessed, prevails among many, both preachers and hearers. The former deal in bold figures and hyperbolical descriptions. They address a congregation of sober Christians, as if they were an assembly of heathen, or a band of thieves and murderers. Their doctrine descends not like the dew, but like the rain in a storm; their voice is not gentle and affectionate, but loud and reproachful: it rolls like thunder, or roars like a whirlwind. They paint the character of the vicious man with blacker strokes of depravity, than the hue with which Milton has drawn the character of Satan; and they represent the Supreme Being as hating the work of his own hands, as fired with anger, and armed with vengeance. The hearers listen with admiration of the wonderful oratorical powers of the speaker. Their bosoms are agitated almost to agony; but they are at the same time charmed; for there are many men, who are never so much delighted, as when objects of terror are rendered visible to their imagination. The effect of such preaching sometimes is, that the hearers, their mental sight being accustomed to none except the most flaming colors, are too much inclined to regard the common and essential duties of life, which are best performed with calmness and moderation, as not sufficiently splendid to be of any value. Religion they suppose to be something more than humble reverence of God, love to Christ, justice, sincerity and benevolence; and it is never so highly prized by them, as when it partakes the most largely of enthusiasm.

To such an impassioned kind of eloquence the tem-



perate Dr Howard could not attain; and from my knowledge of his sentiments I can say, he would not have attained it, if he could. But though he was never fervent, yet such was the goodness of his heart and his affection to his friends that he was sometimes pathetic. I particularly recollect two occasions, in which the auditories were much moved by the simple pathos of his voice and language. One was at the funeral of the Rev. Dr Clarke, whose sudden death every one bewailed. The other was at a public Commencement, when his long-trying and faithful friend, President Willard, lay dangerously sick. On both these occasions, though there were other performances, and by men, who were commonly esteemed more eloquent than he, yet the tide of grief rose to its height, whilst he was speaking.

This effect was in part produced by the unaffected simplicity of his character. When Dr Howard appeared to be moved, every person believed that he was really moved. Any event, which so good a man lamented, was a subject of lamentation to all good men: it was impossible therefore to resist being drawn with him into the same current of grief. Simplicity distinguished Dr Howard on these, and on all other occasions. He never covered his mind with the varnish of art; he never pretended to more feeling, knowledge, or virtue, than he possessed; but with manly plainness he exhibited his sentiments and character such as they existed.

This freedom from affectation was probably one of the causes of the taciturnity, which was regretted by his friends. The Duke de la Rochefoucault observes, that no man ever opens his mouth, unless prompted by vanity; and though we do not entirely assent to the remark, — for Rochefoucault is the satirist of human nature, and

disposed to exaggerate all its foibles and vices ; yet we are compelled to grant, that many of the speeches which we hear are dictated by vanity and affectation. Of this truth Dr Howard was aware ; and this led him often to be silent. He did not choose to speak of himself ; he had no ambition to wound the feelings of his neighbor by a smart reply or a witty sarcasm ; for flattery and compliments, either serious or sportive, he was totally unqualified by his sincerity : his exemption from prejudice prevented him from railing against the opinions of others, because they differed from his own ; his civility rendered him unwilling to offend, by needless contradiction, those who were present : and his prudence, his benevolence, his religion, forbade him to slander the absent. We have cut off so many of the usual topics of conversation, that few are left for the candid Howard. The subjects, which he preferred, were science, literature, politics, ethics, and theology ; and when he spoke on them, he was heard with pleasure. He was not however always grave and scientific : for he sometimes enlivened conversation by a sudden stroke of original and genuine humor, which excited the risibility of every one except himself ; but it was manifest that he took pains to repress the sallies of his tongue, under the just apprehension that the licentiousness of wit, once put in motion, might lead others, and possibly himself, to pass over the limits, which decency, truth, and Christianity prescribe. He more frequently in conversation charmed the benevolent, by defending the reputation of a brother, when it was attacked, not maliciously perhaps, but ungenerously, with the keen and polished shafts of ridicule. Dr Howard was silent, but never absent, in company : he listened with attention to what others

said ; and a pleasant smile often marked his approbation of the observations of his friends, particularly of the young who required this encouragement.

Of humility, the peculiar virtue of a Christian, he was an eminent example. No grace of the mind is so often affected as humility. There are men, who, under the name of foibles, accuse themselves of feelings, which they secretly hope every one will regard as amiable weaknesses. There are others, who, that they may enjoy the satisfaction of speaking of themselves, even acknowledge their vices. There are others, who humble themselves with so much stateliness, and condescend with so much dignity, that it is manifest, that they think themselves superior to those who are in their presence. In fine, there are others, who write long journals of humility, to be read after their death, and which, though they are dictated by vanity and egotism, are designed to possess the minds of all, who peruse them, with an exalted idea of their sanctity ; for they confess in general terms, that they are the vilest of men ; whilst they are careful not to specify the particular acts of folly, meanness, and insincerity, which are known to their contemporaries. The humility of Dr Howard was not of this spurious sort : he never mentioned either his virtues or his faults ; but it was evident at the same time to all, who were intimately acquainted with him, that he had a humble sense of his own talents and moral attainments.

His humility was sincere ; and sincerity was the soul of all his virtues. He did not join in sentiment with those artful men, who think that a good cause may be promoted by stratagems. A subterfuge and deceit, an equivocation and a lie, were in his view equally criminal. For the sake of obtaining the approbation of men, and

promoting his worldly interest, he never professed to esteem what he really despised.

The sincerity and uprightness of his mind led him to inquire after truth with diligence, and to pursue it with impartiality. The result of his careful investigation was, that he saw reason to reject the theological systems of Athanasius and Calvin ; and though at the time, in which he entered on his ministerial life, the religious opinions that he adopted were much more unpopular, than they are at present ; yet he was not deterred by this consideration from openly declaring what he believed. His great predecessor it is true, had before brought forward the same sentiments ; but except from a small number of the laity, and a still smaller number of the clergy, he had nothing to expect but opposition. The creed, which he early embraced, he saw no cause afterwards to change, but he persevered in it to the last ; and long before his death he had the pleasure of seeing many rise up, to defend the same cause. However highly I approve his sentiments, I presume not to say, that he had discovered the truth ; but of this I have not any doubt, that being blessed by his Maker with a clear understanding, he exerted himself to obtain it, with industry and patience, with humility and devotion. To those Christians, who are disposed to appeal to the authority of intelligent and virtuous men in support of their opinions, the authority of Dr Howard might with force be urged. But on this species of argument, which is seldom alleged, except by those who cannot produce any better proof, no stress ought to be laid ; because experience shows, — though before we become acquainted with the actual state of human life, we are ready to assert the contrary, — that wise and good men are not confined to any particular system of religious faith.

The candor of Dr Howard equalled his love of truth. He was not only indulgent in his thoughts toward those, who differed from him in opinion, but he also treated them with respect and kindness. As the religious sentiments of Christians, however erroneous they might be, and their ceremonies and modes of worship, however superstitious they might appear, were not in his judgment the proper subjects of ridicule, he neither allowed in himself, nor did he approve in others, a sarcastic, indecent, or irreverent way of speaking of objects, which any sincere and serious believer might deem sacred. For his catholicism he was entitled to great praise; because the temptations to an opposite practice are powerful; and nothing is more common than to hear Christians, especially those who esteem themselves wiser or more holy than their neighbors, charge each other with absurdity, superstition, fanaticism, or heresy.

The spirit of Dr Howard rendered him averse to such uncharitable thoughts; for mildness reigned in his heart. Gentle by nature, by habit, and by religion, he could not express severity, which he never felt; gall could not flow from his tongue, for there was none in his constitution. His temper was sweet and amiable; and his prudence forbade him to imbitter it with bigoted and malignant invectives. His soul was calm; and what motive could he have to disturb its tranquillity with the furious storms of uncharitable zeal?

This well regulated temper inspired him with constant cheerfulness. Though reserved, he was not solemn; though serious, not gloomy. The peace which dwelt in his heart, appeared in his countenance in traits, which no art can counterfeit.

That such a man was dear to his friends will readily

be believed ; and he was so friendly in his disposition and behaviour, that many were bound to him by this affectionate tie. His parishioners loved him as a brother, or honored him as a father ; for they knew that he had engaged in the ministry, from pure, disinterested, and pious motives ; that he discharged all its duties with diligence, fidelity, and sympathy. The affection, which they felt for him, never suffered any interruption ; but as old age approached, and he advanced towards heaven, he became more firmly fixed in their hearts, like a tree, the roots of which penetrate still further into the earth, in proportion as its branches rise in the air. He was dear to his brethren in the ministry, who always welcomed him with smiles of complacence. He was dear to all his fellow citizens, who admired his good sense, and venerated his patriotism, his integrity, his benevolence, and his sanctity. As a kind master, a tender husband, and a most indulgent parent, he was in particular dear to his family. That he was dear to God we have reason humbly to believe ; for the character, which he possessed, must have been formed by habitual devotion, by piety which filled his heart, and whence flowed all the virtues which he practised.

My hearers will learn with pleasure, that this good man enjoyed as much felicity, as usually falls to the lot of mortals. His days were passed with usefulness, an approving conscience, and the blessing of heaven ; and though he was sometimes sick, and sometimes afflicted, yet the edge of bodily pain was blunted by patience, and the force of mental anguish was weakened by resignation. A constitution naturally delicate was preserved to old age by care and temperance ; and to a world of unmingled joy he at length passed through the valley of

death, without experiencing the horrors, which sometimes overshadow the dismal region.

His example teaches an important lesson. It instructs those generous minds, who aspire to a high rank in virtue, that it is possible even in this world to be humble, sincere, upright, faithful, candid, mild, benevolent, and pious.

His example may also teach religionists to dismiss an uncharitable and bigoted spirit. It has been often asserted in the heat of controversy, that theological sentiments such as Dr Howard embraced are unfavorable to the cause of piety and virtue. The life of this good man is one confutation of this opinion. He was neither a Trinitarian nor a Calvinist; but his conduct manifested, that he was the friend of morality, the humble disciple of Jesus, and the devout worshipper of God.

We cannot forbear to lament, that we no longer enjoy his society in this world; but amidst our sorrow we find consolation. His body is consigned to the tomb; but he will long live in the remembrance of his friends; he will live by the recollection of his many virtues: and should this kind of life be styled a mere imagination, — and it must be confessed that alone it does not afford a strong motive of comfort, — we have something more substantial to offer; he will live happily and eternally in another world: for since the doctrine of immortality has been brought to light by the gospel, we have reason to believe that this life is the beginning of our existence, and that the good man by death is only advanced from a lower to a higher part of the kingdom of God.

S. after the Funeral of the Rev. Simeon Howard, D. D. minister of West Church, in Boston.



\* \* Dr Howard was born at Bridgewater, in Massachusetts, May 10th, 1733 ; graduated at Harvard University, 1758 ; ordained at West Church in Boston, May 6th, 1767 ; elected fellow of the Corporation of the University, 1780. He died Aug. 13th, 1804.



## SERMON XXIX.

DUTIES OF A PEOPLE TO THEIR MINISTER.

---

1 THESS. V. 12, 13.

AND WE BESEECH YOU, BRETHREN, TO KNOW THEM WHICH  
LABOR AMONG YOU, AND ARE OVER YOU IN THE LORD, AND  
ADMONISH YOU; AND TO ESTEEM THEM VERY HIGHLY IN  
LOVE FOR THEIR WORKS SAKE.

My brethren, as you intend this evening to introduce into the church another pastor, no text appears more suitable for this morning's discourse, than the words which I have read, and no subject more proper to be treated on this occasion, than the duty which the members of a Christian congregation owe to their minister.

The relation, in which a minister of the gospel stands to the people whom he serves, is one, which is not only the source of mutual satisfaction; but it is also one, which calls for the exercise of the kindest affections of the human heart. In this country particularly, where he is chosen and supported by the flock, over whom he is placed, and not imposed on them by a superior authority, and where the rights of a minority are so much attended to, that few ministers venture to accept a call, unless it is nearly unanimous, he is the object of their general approbation; and he is viewed, not as a lord over the her-

itage of God, not as a domineering priest and spiritual tyrant, but as their father and friend, as the companion of their social hours, as their counsellor in perplexities, and as their comforter in affliction. If his lot is cast among a people of religious and sober habits ; if he is a man of such decent talents, that they have no reason to be ashamed of him ; if his character, though not faultless, is yet free from any scandalous stain ; if his heart is sincere and kind ; in particular, if he is circumspect in his conversation and discreet in his behaviour, he will pass through life the object of their love : if his talents and virtues rise still higher, he will be the object, not only of their love, but of their veneration. The obligation then of a Christian congregation to their minister may be comprised in these two words ; they should love him, and they should esteem him. From this obligation of love and esteem result several duties ; some of which I now proceed to lay before you.

I. I might suggest, in the first place, that it is the duty of a religious society to provide for the comfortable support of the minister, whom they esteem and love. But it is not proper to say much on this head ; because it is not easy to touch it, without appearing to love the world more than God. A preacher of the gospel, it is true, has physical wants like other men ; but wretched is that preacher, whose principal motive of entering into the ministry is the emolument, which he expects to derive from the office ; for he possesses the temper, which effectually prevents him from discharging the duties of his station with pleasure to himself and profit to others. He should be disinterested and heavenly-minded ; but his heart is distracted with avaricious anxieties. Every

page of the gospel reproaches him for his selfish care ; for the gospel everywhere proclaims this precept, Love not the world, nor the things of the world : if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. The wealth, which he delights in, he cannot easily obtain ; for in such a country as this the salaries of ministers, though sufficient for comfort, for ease, for content, are not sufficient to satisfy the demands of covetousness. He is compelled therefore to turn his attention to pursuits foreign from his profession, by which he soon loses his reputation ; or he contrives to save money by a mortifying course of meanness and inhospitality, which renders him the object of derision. — I will only say then, that a generous people will attend to the wants of their minister, and will never put him to the painful necessity of giving them any hints on the subject.

II. A second duty, which results from the love and esteem of a people to their minister, is to attend his ministrations. Christians go to church for the sake of worshipping God, of joining in the celebration of the holy ordinances, of hearing the divine word, and of being instructed and confirmed in the belief of the doctrines and in the practice of the precepts of the gospel. These higher motives are not incompatible with another of an inferior kind, esteem of their pastor. If they entertain a sincere affection and respect for him, they will delight to meet him in the house of God. Though he may be neither a weak nor a vain man, though he may have an humble opinion of the merit of his own performances, and may not be fond of popular applause ; yet he cannot fail of being mortified, if the seats of the church are frequently empty, and if he commonly preaches to a

listless congregation. For in this manner is not treated the man, who is revered and loved. The people plainly manifest by such conduct, that they think what the preacher delivers is of no importance; which is saying, as emphatically as actions can say, that he is the object of their indifferencence or contempt.

III. A third duty, which flows from the esteem of a people to their minister, is to receive his instructions with candor. Of the man, whom we respect and love, we are always ready to suppose the best; and, we do not attribute to him improper motives, when his words and actions admit of a favorable construction. In reproving particular vices, a preacher will give offence to his hearers, unless their hearts are filled with affection toward him; but if they love him, they will believe, that he means nothing but their good, and that he is not indulging himself in satirical invectives, or bringing against them a railing accusation. If he would describe any vice naturally, he must think of an individual, who has been guilty of it; and though if he has seen much of the world, he can easily direct his thoughts to times which are past, and places which are remote; yet as one sinner resembles another sinner, one slanderer — another slanderer, one miser — another miser, provided any of his congregation are of a similar character, he may appear to deduce his observations directly from their practice. A preacher is in particular exposed to uncandid interpretations, when he is condemning the vices of the rich. On the wealthy men of a religious society a minister principally depends for his support: they expect therefore to be treated with distinguished attention and indulgence. But the rich are exposed to sin as

well as the poor. Ill would it become a messenger of Jesus, who, when he was on earth, had not where to lay his head, and who came to preach the gospel to the poor, to flatter the rich, and to reserve all the severity of reproof for the indigent and wretched. The gospel in many places declares, and experience confirms the truth of the declaration, that a continued course of prosperity has a tendency to harden the heart, to render men haughty, and to remove their affections from God to the world. These solemn and painful truths the rich men of a society, if they have pious minds, will hear with candor; and if they love their minister they will rejoice that he has so much independence of sentiment, as to dare to do his duty.

IV. A fourth duty, which results from the affection of a people to their minister, is to view him with indulgence, not to expect too much of him, that he should be exempt from weaknesses and imperfections, that he should possess qualities, which do not often meet in the same person, or which are even incompatible with each other. We wish that he whom we love should be the first of preachers; but we are ready to pardon him, if he is not. A knowledge of human nature will convince us, that no man excels in all points. For God, the benefactor of all his creatures, imparts his gifts variously to different men: on no one does he bestow every talent; whilst few are left destitute of some valuable endowment, by which they can gain esteem, and benefit the world.

The ministers of the gospel, like other human beings, differ from each other in their several qualifications. One is remarkably gifted in prayer: another reads the Scriptures in a solemn and impressing manner. One

shines in conversation, and communicates in a familiar way many valuable religious and moral hints: and another, though he is silent or cold, when he visits those who are in health, has still the power, like a blessed angel, of imparting light and consolation to the chambers of the sick. Of preaching, as relates both to matter and manner, there are various kinds of merit. One minister excels in the composition; and another, in the delivery, of a sermon. One does not attract much attention to his sermons, till they appear in print: and another, who impairs his reputation by publishing his discourses, is animated and eloquent in the pulpit. One displays profound learning and a critical knowledge of the Greek and oriental languages: another is not well acquainted with any language except the English, but that he manages with sufficient dexterity. One is a deep logician; his method is clear; his distinctions, accurate; his arguments, powerful: another is pathetic, affectionate, interesting. The voice of one preacher is sonorous, alarming; it makes the hearer almost start involuntarily from his seat; and expands his eyes, his ears, his mouth, with terror or with admiration; the voice of another preacher is soft, gentle; it sounds in the ear like the breathings of a flute; it charms the heart, and fills the eyes with tears.

These are valuable endowments; for they all contribute to the benefit of the church and the edification of Christians. Every preacher would wish for himself to possess them all: but it is impossible; and you who are hearers, ought to confess that it is so. In the beginning of life, before a young man has become well acquainted with the nature of his talents, he will endeavor to acquire many different treasures of knowledge; but he will

soon be carried, by the propensity of his genius, toward those attainments, in which he is formed to excel. This inclination will divert his attention from other things of equal value : and he will remain in a great measure unskilled in them. Censure him not for his deficiencies ; but if you have no reason to doubt his industry, applaud his exertions, and enjoy the benefit of the gifts, which he has obtained.

The indulgence, for which I am pleading, is in particular due to the vented ministers of the gospel, who are constantly preaching to the same people, and who, in the course of a year, deliver a hundred sermons in the same pulpit. It is vain to demand of them the same style of eloquence, which distinguishes the celebrated preachers, who have appeared only on particular occasions. The sermon, which is filled with tropes and figures, with glowing language, with pathetic addresses, in a word, with the grace and energies of the superior kinds of oratory, is hardly called for by many. Why do not our ministers, it is asked, preach like the divines of the French nation, or deliver their sermons with the life and pathos of Whitefield ? The answer is, that the French divines, who have gained so much renown, preached only in Lent and Advent ; and that Whitefield, who, it must be confessed, possessed astonishing powers of oratory — and great knowledge of human nature — never remained long in one place, but as soon as he perceived that the attention of his auditors was beginning to droop, he flew to another part of the country. In truth the animated style of eloquence is not designed for common use ; it is a mere luxury, a dish to be served up on holydays. The figures, which enrich this species of style do not grow on every tree : correct and elegant



similes and metaphors are rare productions. The settled ministers of the gospel must be content to supply their flocks with the plain and substantial food of religion. If they are constantly aiming at something more exquisite, they will ere long become declaimers and enthusiasts ; they will soon get to the end of their stock of images and glowing expressions, and will go over them again and again ; they will grow affected and artificial ; and though there will still be an appearance of heat, yet it will be a mere appearance ; for their language will be colder than the rays of a December moon. As the truth of these observations is established by experience, you, my brethren, will be satisfied with that moderate warmth, which will last through life ; and you will consider him as a useful preacher, who wins you to virtue and piety, or confirms you in them, by little and little, though he seldom makes a deep impression in any particular discourse.

V. A fifth duty, which may be derived from the love that a people feel for their minister, is a willingness to allow him sufficient time for exercise and strengthening his body. Man is a being who is formed in part for contemplation ; but from an examination of his frame, it is evident, that he is principally constituted for action, which is necessary for the preservation of his health and the continuance of his cheerfulness. Public speaking may in general be salutary ; but the preparations of the study impair the constitution, wear away the fine parts of the brain, which are seated so near the region of thought, cover the face with paleness, and fill the breast and head with pain, and the heart with palpitations. The best remedy for these evils is daily exer-



cise, either riding, walking, or manual labor; but the time, which a minister spends in these employments, must be taken from his study. He cannot therefore be always meditating and writing: he cannot compose two, or even one discourse, every week, and continue the practice during life. There are ministers, who boast that they are able to do it: but such persons ought to be regarded as prodigies, as men whose bodies are made of brass, and whose nerves are iron. If a minister cannot frame two sermons in a week, and yet two sermons are expected to be preached in the same pulpit, recourse must be had to some practicable means of supplying this demand. The way, which our fathers judged the best, and which you, my brethren, have now wisely adopted, is to have two ministers in every church; but even this is not sufficient, unless recourse is also had to the other custom, which generally prevails in this country, that of frequent interchanges. There are congregations, who have so much misguided affection for their minister, that they do not readily acquiesce in the practice; but if they have a real love for him, they will be willing that his mind should be occasionally relieved from the exertion of thought, that the cord of invention should not be constantly stretched. If they rejoice in his good name, they should consent to give him an opportunity to acquire a reputation abroad, as well as at home. If they are truly benevolent they should allow other religious societies to be illuminated with his instructions, as well as their own. I am aware that to these observations it may be replied, that not any person attempts to control his minister in this respect: but he certainly does attempt to control him, if he laments to him, or complains to others, that he can seldom hear him preach;

and in particular, if he absents himself from public worship, when a neighboring minister is in the pulpit. How often these exchanges should take place, is what I shall not undertake to decide: but they ought to be frequent, particularly in the former part of a minister's life. The hearing of a variety of preachers is beneficial on several accounts. It renders Christians more candid, less bigoted, less attached to their own dogmas: it connects religious societies together by the ties of charity: and affords them an opportunity of listening to the best sermons of the ministers in the vicinity, as such are the discourses, which are commonly carried abroad.

VI. A sixth duty, which results from the esteem of a people to their minister, is to treat him as their equal, without attempting to deprive him of his freedom. As the pastor on his part, should not lord it over the church; so the church, on their part, should not domineer over him. Liberty is one of the most precious of all blessings; it is dearer than riches; it is dearer than fame: but though every man ardently desires to secure it to himself, yet there are too many, who endeavor to subject others to their control. In this country, a minister depends for his daily bread, and even for his existence as a pastor, on the good will of his people, who can withdraw from him, and leave him without a congregation, whenever they please: those therefore, who have generous hearts, will take pains to prevent him from feeling this dependence too sensibly. In everything which is innocent or indifferent, they should permit him to conduct himself by his own discretion. For in the performance of many actions there are various manners, one of which is nearly, nay quite as good as another; and no

man has a right to control his brother in this respect. Such is human nature, that any direct attempt to command a minister will in most cases be resisted, and resisted with effect, though not without the loss of peace ; but the indirect attacks on his freedom he cannot so easily repel ; they ought therefore never to be made. One indirect way in which a minister may be deprived of his liberty, is supporting him by grants, that is, gifts, instead of a fixed stipend : for whatever is bestowed on him under this name is considered as a favor conferred, and not as his due ; and he cannot receive it, without being degraded in his own eyes, and losing a portion of his independence. Another indirect way, in which a pastor may be deprived of his liberty, is praising him to his face : for the hearers who thus applaud him, either with or without judgment, think that they have the same right to reprove and to command him, with as much or with as little reason. The preacher, who has the misfortune to be told that he is admired, is always more or less a slave. By courting popularity he binds a chain about his neck, which bends him to the ground : so true is it that those motives of conduct only, which descend from heaven, such as the love of God, and the love of man, advance the dignity of human nature ; whilst vain and selfish feelings render it mean, and wretched. An affectionate people ought not to debase the character of their minister ; but they shall leave him in full possession of his independence ; and not corrupt his mind by pouring commendation into his ear.

VII. Another duty, which immediately flows from the love, that a people entertain for their minister, is a friendly intercourse with him. They should view him,

not merely as their instructor, but as their neighbor, as their associate ; and they should cheerfully manifest their good will to him, by paying him visits, and by receiving them in return. In youth he should be regarded as the son of the old ; when advanced in years, as the father of the young ; and in every period of his life, as the brother of those of his own age. Happy is a pastor, when he is connected with a flock, who are disposed to live with him on such amicable terms ; who demand of him neither austerity nor cant, but the honest flow of a warm and pious heart ; who are not ashamed that he should be the spectator of their pleasures,—for they are innocent ; that he should be the hearer of their conversations,—for they are chaste ; who break off no diversions at his approach,—because they indulge in none, which are inconsistent with the gravity of his profession ; in whose company not only the aged delight, but in the presence of whom the young smile with renewed cheerfulness, and children gambol with redoubled glee. It would afford him satisfaction, if the duties of his office would permit him to spend much of his time in this pleasurable way ; but it ought to be observed, that no minister has leisure to visit an affectionate people, as often as they wish. His mornings, except when he is called to visit the sick and afflicted, ought to be entirely devoted to study and exercise. Beside which the evenings of winter ought generally to be consecrated to books. If he has a family, the care of it will require much of his time. In short, he has not more leisure for visiting than any other industrious man, who faithfully discharges the obligations of his station. Those parishioners who are disposed to complain, that their minister does not visit them enough, may be asked, whether it is

not right, that a lawyer should spend most of his time in his office, a merchant in his counting-house, a mechanic in his work-shop, a husbandman in his field, and consequently a clergyman in his study? He, who desires to be either eminent or useful, must employ in business the greater part of the day, and bestow even to innocent pleasure, only a few of his hours. The minister who is constantly running about from house to house, will soon exhaust every pleasant and instructive topic of conversation: and though he may gain the fondness, yet he will lose the respect of his people.

VIII. Finally, another duty, which a people owe to a minister whom they esteem, is the practice of the rules of godliness and righteousness. As they receive instruction from his preaching, they ought to return the obligation, and to improve him by their good example. A pastor, who is happily seated in the midst of a religious flock, is as much indebted to them for his progress in the christian life, as they are to him. The established habits of goodness, which have long existed in a well-ordered society, which have not originated from sudden impressions, but which have been formed and strengthened by all the means of a pious and virtuous education and which have been continued from father to son, and from mother to daughter, — are in particular highly beneficial to a young minister of the gospel.

It is here, my brethren, that you can show yourselves the friends of the man, whom you this day ordain over you. Let him learn wisdom and experience from your aged Christians; a knowledge of the human heart from those of you, “who have seen many men and many

cities : \* and let him be confirmed in tenderness, in sympathy, in resignation to the will of God, by those of you who have been afflicted : let him be improved in delicacy and purity by your women, and in simplicity and innocence by your well-educated children. Hold up to him the image of your departed friends, who were distinguished for their piety and benevolence, and who, whilst they lived, were the supports and ornaments of this church.

You, my brethren, who survive, are a society of friends : you respect each other : and you have chosen for your pastor a man who has every disposition to prolong your tranquillity and increase your felicity. Without saying anything of his talents, which speak for themselves, I will only observe, that he has been blessed with enlightened and virtuous parents : and that having passed his childhood under their discreet and tender guidance, his youth has been favored with the best means of intellectual and moral improvement, which the country affords. With such advantages, you have reason to expect that he will be an affectionate pastor ; that he will be, not only your instructor, but your son, your brother, your friend, and your comforter.

My young friends of this society, who, by the ordination of a new pastor, begin a new era of hope, of love, of joy, how happy would you be, if you would determine at the same time to commence your religious course ! Precious are the first fruits of life, when they are offered to God ; fragrant is the perfume, which ascends to heaven from the flowers of spring ; melodious is the song of devotion, when it is chanted by a youthful tongue.

Give yourselves up therefore to your heavenly Father, be and in every sense the disciples of your benevolent Redeemer. You are his friends, if you do what he commands you: He commands you to celebrate his dying love. Hesitate not a moment to obey his reasonable, his affectionate call. Join the parents, whom you venerate, and the pastor, whom you esteem, at the table of the Lord: and there may you find increase of strength in every good resolution, and growth in every christian grace, till at length you rise up a holy temple in the Lord, fair without and beautiful within, and in which the spirit of the Almighty will delight forever to dwell.

Morning of Jan 1st, 1800, previous to the ordination of the Rev. Samuel Cary.

## CHARGE I.

DELIVERED AT THE ORDINATION OF THE REV. SAMUEL CARY,  
IN THE EVENING OF JAN. 1st, 1809.

My dear brother, having declared you to be a pastor of this church, I do now, in behalf of the brethren, and at their particular request, give you the right hand of affection: and I do, in their name, promise you their friendship: their joy in your prosperity; their sympathy in your afflictions; their candor and indulgence; and all those offices of zeal and love, which will advance your reputation, and render your talents useful, and your situation happy.

I again offer you my right hand, as a token of my personal regard. I receive you into my bosom as a brother; and I request that you will give me a place in your heart.

We have presented to you the hand of affection: and you will now permit me, my brother, to address you in a word of exhortation; and whilst I claim no superiority over you, to remind you of what you already know, and of duties, which have frequently been the subjects of your meditation.

The solemn charge, which St Paul gives to his sons Timothy and Titus, contains almost all the essential rules, that can be offered to a young minister of the gos-



pel. As, however, it has often been repeated on similar occasions, I shall not, though it is more important than anything which I can suggest, go over it again; but I desire you to read it with attention, and to impress its precepts deeply on your heart.

In entering on the duties of the ministry, you have a responsible part to perform: you have to instruct this people by your preaching, and to edify them by your example.

1. Your aim in preaching the gospel should be, to make those, who hear you, wise, happy, and good. Adopt therefore those modes, which will contribute most effectually to these great ends. Nourish the flock with substantial and salutary food. Lead them into green pastures, and beside the still waters; and not to thirsty plains, and the barren wilderness.

As the foundation of all solid improvement is laid in the understanding, begin with addressing the reason of your hearers. Convince them by clear and weighty arguments, of the truth of the important doctrines which you teach, and of the precepts which you inculcate. When the understanding has received a truth, it will be more easy for you to interest the heart: but the belief or practice which is built on nothing except enthusiasm or prejudice, has no permanent basis: temptation and passion will destroy it; and leave the mind without any principles or fixed rules of conduct.

I mean not to recommend to you a metaphysical mode of preaching. "Metaphysics is not only a sublime, but a useful science:"\* and it communicates to us the knowledge of many propositions, which are capable

\* Belsham.

of demonstration : but these profound speculations are unintelligible to a common auditor : they require the deep attention of the closet : they must be read more than once, and carefully examined ; for in passing through the ear, they do not make a sufficient impression to be comprehended. Consider your flock, not as philosophers, but as men and Christians ; and deduce your arguments, not in general from abstract reasoning, but from the sacred Scriptures, illuminated with the light of common sense.

When you have enlightened the head, it will then be proper for you to address and warm the heart. As this, however, requires extraordinary powers, you should here exert all your talents. Raise your eyes to heaven, and endeavor to acquire a glow and energy of religious feelings. Enkindle in your heart the flame of devotion, and the fire of charity. Be interested in what you deliver : for unless you are, all attempts at pathos will be mere affectation, and will chill the soul and benumb its affections. Never make a show of more sensibility, than you actually possess ; for if at any time, from bodily indisposition, or that icy state of mind to which the most fervent men are occasionally subject, your own heart is cold, swelling words and boisterous emphasis will not warm the hearts of your hearers. I know that you disapprove, and I do not recommend to you, the use of theatrical gestures ; for I believe with you, that tricks of action are not necessary to enforce the truths of the gospel. I do not ask you to thunder, like a heathen orator ; to bellow, like the leader of a political faction ; to rant, like a preacher of enthusiasm ; for your aim should be, not to excite, but to restrain, the passions of your auditors ; not to fill their breasts with frenzy and

fanaticism, but with meekness and moderation. Let your eloquence, like the religion, which it is intended to infuse, be gentle: let it not rush like a torrent, but flow like a clear and majestic river.

You will acknowledge the propriety of these directions, if you consider what ought to be the principal subjects of your preaching. They are the duties of piety and virtue. These duties are so plain and evident, that a simplicity of style and manner, and a softness of speech, will most readily convey them to the bosoms of Christians. Insist not you to dwell frequently on these topics: bring them oft in and again before your hearers, under every possible form and variety, that you may excite their attention, and touch their hearts.

But whenever you preach, remember that you are a Christian minister: and that it is your business, not merely to inculcate a system of morality, but that morality which is taught in the gospel. Enforce every duty on Christian principles: and deduce your precepts from the sacred Scriptures. Preach Christ, and his religion, and not the doctrines and commandments of men. The virtues which you enjoin, establish upon the authority of God. This will lead you to discourse on his nature and perfections; subjects which will furnish you with many arguments for the practice of holiness. Whenever you speak to the people, consider yourself in the presence of that adorable Being, whose attributes are both sublime and lovely, and who is the fear, the hope, the joy of the universe. This contemplation will give elevation to your sentiments, and dignity to your language.

Let the life and character of the great head of the church also frequently constitute the subjects of your

preaching. Let him be the model which you hold up, whenever you describe the perfect man : propose his example for the emulation and encouragement of the believer. In the church, which you have now entered, particular days are appointed, to commemorate the remarkable circumstances of our Saviour's mediation : especially his birth, death, and resurrection. On these occasions, you will have an opportunity of calling the attention of your hearers to the sublime virtues of the Redeemer, and of describing him as the object of the love and veneration of the Christian. But on all other occasions, it will not be easy for you to deliver a sermon, without reference to the authority and example of Christ : for you cannot name a duty, which he has not both commanded and practised.

As preaching ought in general to be practical, I would counsel you to study the constitution of the human mind : that you may be able to describe the nature and qualities of actions, and to point out the salutary fruits of virtue, and the deplorable effects of sin. Never spare vice : but boldly rebuke it, under whatever form it may appear. Whilst you console the good man, alarm the conscience of the impious. Show, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord ; but that God will retaliate on the heads of the wicked the evil deeds which they commit.

But though preaching ought generally to be practical ; yet you should not forget, that in religion there are doctrines as well as duties. To the former you ought sometimes to turn your attention. Explain what is obscure ; and exhibit the doctrines of the gospel in such a rational view, as that they shall approve themselves to the common sense of your hearers. As there

is a great variety of sentiments among men, in treating these subjects, you must of necessity differ from the opinions of many Christians : which will render this part of your office in some measure unpleasant : in particular when you are obliged to oppose established errors, which appear to you to corrupt the purity of divine revelation. This opposition, as an honest man, you ought to make, and will make : but at the same time avoid, as much as is possible, the thorny paths of controversy. “ The dispute about religion and the practice of it seldom go together ;” \* but the usual effect of polemical divinity and of polemical preaching, is to embitter the temper and harden the heart.

II. But however solid, eloquent, and instructive your preaching may be, its effect will not be great, unless you add the force of a good example. It is absolutely necessary, my brother, that you should be a man of piety and virtue. Be honest ; of consequence, a sincere believer of the religion, which you profess. Be circumspect in your behaviour, pure in your conversation, temperate, humble, disinterested, and charitable. In the discharge of your ministry, in particular, be an example to the flock. Do your own duty faithfully : and thus encourage the people to discharge with fidelity the several obligations, which lie upon them. Be the son, the brother, the father of your parishioners. They deserve, and will warmly return, your love. Rejoice with them, when they rejoice ; and weep with them, when they weep. Visit the sick ; comfort and relieve the poor ; dispel the doubts of the penitent ; and pour the light of the gospel into the darkened mind.

Though your profession exempts you from many

\* Young.

temptation : yet there are some, to which it is peculiarly exposed. Know your danger, and carefully guard your heart. The vices and follies, to which clergymen are most prone, are indolence, vanity, haughtiness, the love of popularity, and the love of dominion, envy, flattery of the rich and great, dissimulation, compliance with the prejudices of men, and a bitter and uncharitable zeal. It will demand the most heroic exertions, and the most ardent prayers, to keep yourself entirely free from the contagion of these sins. But if you fill your heart with devotion and love ; if you resolve to live, not for yourself, but for the good of others, and for the glory of God, you will succeed in the laborious attempt.

It is happy for you, that you are not only to be connected with an affectionate church, but that you are to dwell in a town, where the habits of so many are virtuous ; where there is so little superstition and fanaticism, and so much of the spirit of benevolence and genuine Christianity ; where the people are universally attached to their pastors ; and where the several clergymen, though they have adopted dissimilar creeds, live together like a family of brothers. In particular, the young ministers, with whom you will have the longest intercourse, are not only adorned with brilliant talents, but are blessed with candid hearts. I advise you to cultivate their friendship. Conversation with them will be the source of mutual improvement. Their learning, taste, and eloquence will excite your emulation ; and as I am persuaded that both you and they have honorable minds, you will never be jealous of each other's success. From the combined efforts of you and them, I expect to see "the new era of preaching," which is already commenced, become still more splendid ; an era, in which

the ministers of this town will rival the solidity of the English, and the elegance of the French, divines.

Whilst you run with them a generous career, remember that your country and posterity, as well as this religious society, have demands on your talents. Whatever time therefore you can spare from the duties of your office, devote to those literary pursuits, to which your taste inclines you, and in which you may render yourself the most useful. As the country is still too young, to give much encouragement to men of letters, the public must be indebted to the spontaneous and unrewarded exertions of the devoted professions for improvements in the art and science. You will not be a worse preacher, because you understand something beside divinity; for there is a connection between all the branches of human knowledge;\* and he, who is skilled in many, will more perfectly comprehend the art, to which he is in particular devoted.

Not only endeavor to acquire a respectable literary character, but be mindful also, that you are the citizen of an extensive republic: and that next to the interests of religion, the interests of your country ought to be dear to your heart. I here claim for you a right, which you possess in common with others, the right of giving your vote at elections, and your opinion on public measures. Under such a government as ours, the judgment of the wise is always of use; and an enlightened clergyman, if he is moderate and candid, will possess his proper share of influence. With patriotic boldness, therefore, employ your tongue, and, if needed, your pen, in favor of good men and honest measures; but never

\* Cicero.

so far forget the sanctity of your vocation, as to make the pulpit the scene of party politics.

In prescribing to you so many duties and exertions I leave you no leisure for sloth, dissipation, and luxury ; no leisure for unprofitable visits, for ungodly mirth and foolish jesting. No, my brother, every moment of your time must be filled up with some useful pursuit. Whilst you breathe, you must think, and speak, and work ; for “ life is short, and there will be rest enough in the grave.” \*

You are still young : but death will soon overtake you. This solemn truth furnishes you with a strong motive to diligence. The world abounds with comforts, and even pleasures : it is a world, every part of which displays the goodness of God : but the present scene is not permanent : all its joys are passing rapidly away ; and you look for something more substantial. A recent affliction has convinced you of the vanity of the world. The loss of an amiable parent has inflicted a wound, which still bleeds. In concluding my address to you, what can I do better, than to exhort you to imitate his devout and holy life : Let the image of his fidelity, his sincerity, his candor, his ardent love of truth, his kindness, his disinterestedness, his piety, and the many other virtues, which adorned his character as a man, and as a minister of the gospel, be ever present in your mind ; and continue through life to be a son, who shall do honor to the memory of so excellent a father.

My beloved brethren of the church, I congratulate you on the auspicious transactions of this day. Of the

\* Priestley.



minister, whom you have now introduced into office, you know my opinion ; you know how highly I approve his settlement among you : this is not the time, nor the place, to praise him. The duty, which you owe him, I pointed out in the morning ; and if I had not, you perfectly understand it. The kindness and generosity, with which you have always treated me, are sure pledges to him of your attention and friendship. During the period of twenty years, no cause of disquiet has arisen ; no circumstance has taken place, to interrupt the harmony, which was so happily begun. With such an affectionate people, my brother has reason to hope that his life will be happy : and you, my friends, on your part, have cause for pleasing expectations. The youth and health of your new pastor promise you many years of usefulness and love ; and long after I am laid in the grave, the light of his instructions will shed a kindly influence on your children. Receive him therefore with respect and affection : and let the spirit of mutual condescension still continue to adorn your society. Endeavor to serve and please each other : live in peace ; and may the God of love and peace be with you.

## CHARGE II.

DELIVERED FEB. 16TH, 1815, AT THE ORDINATION OF REV. ISAAC BLISS PEIRCE, MINISTER OF A CHURCH IN TRENTON, ONEIDA COUNTY, NEW YORK.

My dear brother, as you have now been ordained and publicly declared a minister of the gospel, it is proper that you should in the same public manner be exhorted to perform with fidelity the duties of the important station in which you are placed. The address, which I am to deliver on this occasion, necessarily assumes an imperative form, but it is no further entitled to your attention, than as it is founded on truth and the divine word.

You are a minister of Jesus Christ ; and your business is to preach the religion, which was communicated by him, or his harbingers, the Prophets, and his successors, the Apostles. This religion is contained in the Bible : I do therefore solemnly charge you, in the presence of God, and of the disciples of our common Master who are here assembled, to study the Bible, and to teach nothing which, after a diligent and impartial examination, you do not believe consistent with that sacred book. Read the Scriptures with your understanding : and make use of all the aids, which are afforded by sound reason, a knowledge of ancient customs and ancient learning, and the just rules of biblical criticism.

Let not the truths which you discover, or which you think you discover in the Bible, be concealed in your bosom ; but declare them openly to the world. Integrity is one of the first duties of a preacher of the gospel ; and it will save you much trouble, if you begin your ministerial life with the practice of this virtue : for though it may expose you for a while to the reproach of some worthy Christians, who apprehend that any sentiments which differ from their own tend to impiety and licentiousness, and whose favorable judgment you wish to secure, because they are as upright as yourself ; yet in the end you will find it, not only a straight, but a safe, path. You will never be betrayed by the shortness of your memory into contradictions, a fate which often attends men, who are guilty of equivocations : beside which your opponents will see the worst of you ; and as, from the openness of your character, they will have no cause to suspect that there are any secret heresies in your breast, many of them will at last treat you as an honest, though mistaking, Christian.

I mean not to recommend to you to disclose every opinion, which enters your thoughts. There are many floating in the mind, of which it is not easy to say, whether they are true or false ; and it is frequently imprudent, and sometimes pernicious, to expose them to the world : but in all the peculiar doctrines, which distinguish the different sects of Christians, exhibit yourself without disguise. Be not afraid, nor ashamed, to own the religious party, to which you belong ; that is, to speak plainly, let not only your friends, but the world know, whether you are a Calvinist or an Arminian, a Trinitarian or a Unitarian.

In declaring your sentiments, adopt the most intelli-

gible language, which does not admit of more than one sense. Certain over-prudent men have discovered a way of uttering truth in the words of falsehood. They express themselves in popular phrases, whilst they do not believe the doctrines, which these phrases are generally understood to convey. Thus he who speaks puts one meaning on the terms, and he who hears, another. You will not do this ; for it is not honest, my brother.

But whilst I recommend the open declaration of your sentiments on all proper occasions, at the same time I exhort you not to suffer yourself to become a controversial preacher. Do not think it necessary to introduce your whole system of divinity into every sermon. So far from dwelling always on your peculiar opinions, they ought seldom to be treated. You believe them to be true, and they may be so ; but if they are true, they are not the most important doctrines of Christianity. The essential doctrines of the gospel are not those, in which Christians differ, but those in which they agree : and they are these :

That there is one God, who is the object of love and adoration.

That he sent Jesus Christ to save mankind from sin and misery.

That there will be a resurrection from the dead.

And that piety and virtue will be rewarded, and vice and impiety punished in the other world.

Let these great doctrines, and the duties which result from them, — devotion to God, gratitude to Christ, justice and kindness to men, and prudence, diligence, and temperance as respects ourselves, together with the peculiar virtues of the gospel, humility, disinterestedness, and forgiveness of injuries, — be most frequently the

themes of your discourses. Preach generally in such a manner, as to give no just cause of offence to any one, but that you may reform or edify all who hear you. You will be strongly tempted to leave this plain road, and to enter into the thorny paths of disputation.

For, in the first place, these subjects, though less useful to your hearers, are less difficult to yourself. You have a more complete knowledge of your peculiar opinions, than of any other part of theology ; and it is easier to write a speculative, than a practical sermon.

Secondly, these subjects, will be most acceptable to many of your hearers. They love that preaching, which takes off their attention from themselves, which leaves their consciences at ease, and which flatters them with the hope, that they are increasing in religion, when they are only increasing in knowledge. They rejoice to see how powerful in argument is the man, whom they have elected for their minister ; who does honor to their choice by the able and dexterous manner, in which he lashes his opponents ; and it can plainly be perceived by the nods of approbation, which they interchange on these occasions, that this is preaching which they relish. But I charge you, my brother, to have higher aims. Do not endeavor to attract admiration to yourself by your skill in controversy. Unless particular circumstances impel you to the confutation of error and the vindication of truth, let your discourses be addressed to the heart ; and let their designed tendency be to reform the vicious, and to strengthen the virtuous. Happy will it be for you, if you can attain the divine art of preaching with so much effect, as that each one of your hearers shall apply what you say, not to others, but to himself, and shall secretly resolve to offend God no

more, but to love him and the religion of his Son with increasing ardor.

That you may be able to preach with this effect, study human nature. Make yourself acquainted with the books, which treat in the most satisfactory manner of the powers and operations of the mind, and of the means by which it may most easily be persuaded to follow that which is good. But do not confine yourself to theoretical inquiries: Study human nature, as it exists in real life. For this purpose it will be necessary for you to mix somewhat with the world. Observe the effects of vanity, selfishness, the love of pleasure, avarice, envy and hatred; the many deplorable effects which they produce. Read history, which exhibits the most frightful picture of the crimes and miseries of men, in particular of those of which ambition is the cause. Do not however stop here; for you have as yet seen only a part, and the smallest part of human nature. You do not judge of the morals of a city, from the culprits who are confined in its prisons; nor can you alone determine the character of mankind, from the personages who make a figure in history. The pious, the humble, and the benevolent, who generally prefer the shades of retirement, do not appear: you see only popes and kings, tyrants and warriors, demagogues and rebels. If you examine your fellow men, as they exist in the town where you reside, and among your friends and neighbors, how many instances will you see of industry and cheerfulness, of courtesy and hospitality, of sympathy and benevolence! How many pleasing images will meet your eyes, of conjugal affection, of parental love, of filial reverence, of passive courage, of resignation to the divine will, of patience, of humble piety! I charge you

therefore to do justice to human nature, and to contemplate its dignity as well as its debasement.

Study in particular your own heart ; for as the essential principles of human nature are probably the same in all, by knowing yourself well, you will become intimately acquainted with other men. When you observe your own defects in knowledge and virtue, you will learn at the same time humility and candor. But you will in particular, from the consciousness that you are not yourself inclined to everything which is evil, acquire a sobriety and moderation in your thoughts and representations of mankind, which will forever prevent you from introducing those exaggerated descriptions of the vicious, which deserve to be considered only as theological romances, as they are derived, not from real life, but from an excited imagination, ever fond of leaping over the bounds of truth and nature, and of penetrating into the land of gorgons and demons. You may perhaps tell me that I cut you off from one exuberant source of eloquence ; and this may be true : you can derive no aid from the power which fiction is supposed to impart ; but I leave you another source, which is still more abundant, that of affliction. It is impossible for a minister of a good heart to contemplate the vices and miseries of men without sorrow. The affectionate style of preaching is that which I recommend. The biting language of satire, or the malignant sharpness of invective, ill becomes an instructor, who has in his own bosom passions and appetites, which may entice him to sin, and who feels that he has need of constant and courageous efforts to preserve his uprightness. I charge you therefore, whilst you condemn sin, to treat sinners with tenderness. Beseech them in love as your brothers to leave the fatal

paths, which lead to destruction. Let charity fill your soul, and your language will be persuasive.

But do not satisfy yourself with being only an affectionate preacher; let piety reign in all your discourses. If you are governed by none but worldly motives, and God is not constantly present in your mind, you will find your task irksome. For neither vanity, avarice, nor ambition can receive much gratification in the profession which you have entered. If you are fond of wealth, this is not the situation in which you can obtain it: it will be much, if you can secure to yourself the common conveniences of life. If you love power, you must seek for it in another country, and in other churches: under our republican forms of government, and in the churches of the United States, power is transferred from the priest to the people: there will be many who will undertake to rule you; but you must not attempt to control any one. If you are delighted with the incense of praise, this will seldom be offered, after you cease to be a novelty. I charge you therefore, my brother, to have more exalted motives. God only can satisfy your heart; he only can render your duty easy and pleasant; and he will do it, if you pray to him with sincerity, and endeavor to make yourself worthy of the reception of his favors.

Many other exhortations I might give you; but I forbear; for on these occasions we are not permitted to be long. I conclude therefore with enjoining you to have recourse to the sacred Scriptures, and to supply from that inexhaustible fountain of wisdom the deficiencies of this charge. They contain the religion, which you are to believe, to preach, and to practise; and they have power to qualify you to become a faithful and successful minister of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.



## CHARGE III.

DELIVERED IN BROOKLYN, CONNECTICUT, AT THE INSTALLATION OF REV. SAMUEL JOSEPH MAY, NOV. 5TH, 1823

MY DEAR BROTHER. — Your duty as a minister of the gospel is best learned from the sacred Scriptures, and from your own observation and experience ; but as it is customary on these occasions to deliver a charge, and as it has pleased the ecclesiastical council, convened for your installation, to assign that part to me, I enter upon it in obedience to their commands.

Your duty is, — to lead the public devotions of the church ; to read a portion of the holy Bible, whenever your people shall be assembled in this house ; to administer the ordinances ; to catechise the children ; to visit the sick ; to comfort the afflicted ; and to preach the doctrines and precepts of the Christian religion. But as an exhortation on all these heads would require more time, than this auditory can afford, I will confine myself to the last, your duty as a preacher of the gospel. I make this selection, because preaching is generally considered in the churches of New England as the paramount business of a Christian minister. This was the common opinion of our ancestors and of their contemporaries in England ; and it is not much impaired in the

present age. In many other churches preaching is regarded as a secondary object ; whilst it is supposed that the essential parts, which the clergy have to perform, are prayer and the administration of the sacraments. Whatever your private opinion on this subject may be, it is proper that you should adopt the customs, that prevail in the age and country in which you live, provided they are innocent, and can most easily be made the instruments of doing good.

Preaching is of two kinds, speculative and practical.

I. The former, though the least useful, is not without its advantages. A sermon on such a subject produces an intellectual exertion in the hearers, and invigorates, exalts, and, if the arguments alleged are not sophistical, purifies their minds. In the present state of religious sentiment among us, it seems to be absolutely necessary that you should sometimes give your attention to subjects of speculation. For a great variety of doctrines, which are more or less opposed to each other, is proclaimed in our land. Few of them in any church are taken on trust ; but almost all of them have powerful advocates, who are able to produce either sound or plausible arguments in their favor. As you are encompassed by men of strong and enlightened minds, you also should be furnished with reasons, with which you can defend your creed. The people are not only willing, but eager to hear sermons on these subjects ; and it is proper they should be gratified, as far as it can be done, without weakening their charity, and diverting their attention from the great business of life, the fear of God, and obedience to his commands. I counsel you therefore to make yourself master of all the learning, which

may be necessary to qualify you for the writing of such discourses. Happily this is not so laborious a task at present, as it would have been in former ages; because almost every region of theological science has been carefully explored by different persons, who has each one, according to his taste, examined a portion of the tract. For the sake of saving time, which you may devote to a still more important purpose, I recommend to you to avail yourself of their labors. In this age of the church it is unnecessary that you should read the Fathers, except for improvement in morals and devotion; because others have read them for you, and have extracted from them almost all the facts, which they contain. In like manner you may satisfy yourself with the results of biblical criticism, without entering into all the details. It will be sufficient to make yourself acquainted with the various readings of the Bible, which produce any alteration in the meaning of texts, whilst you pass over the many other various readings, which are acknowledged by all to be of no importance. You will not forget that the time of this transitory life is too precious, to be much employed in the minutiae of knowledge, of whatever kind it may be; and that the mental sight, when it pores too long over microscopical objects, is contracted within limits, which become more and more narrow, till at last it almost loses the power of extending itself to the magnificent prospects of nature and religion.

Having collected from the works of the great masters in theology as much learning, as your leisure and opportunities permit, you will impart the knowledge, which you have acquired, to your people, as far as may be useful to them. As they will not understand you, unless your intellectual vision is distinct, endeavor to ob-

tain a clear view of every subject, which you offer to their attention. Let there be light in your mind, and there will be light in your discourses. Gain, whatever labor it may cost you, the art of writing with perspicuity. Obscurity of style arises not so much from hard words, as from hard sentences, and from using words in a new sense. There are public speakers, who, for the sake of making themselves intelligible to the vulgar, affect to preach in homely language. Now this is as needless as it is offensive ; because in this country among the men and women, who attend church, such a class as the vulgar scarcely exists. There are few of them, who in their childhood were not taught at schools ; and beside reading the holy Scriptures, in which there is such a treasure of words fitly spoken, of words that shine like apples of gold in pictures of silver ; beside this divine volume, they are in the practice of reading the best written English books, in which a great variety of terms, scientific as well as elegant, are introduced. But even they, with all their advantages of education, cannot comprehend a sentence, in which there is no meaning, or in which the words are thrown together without order, or in which the principal term has a meaning, but one which it never received before. Let there be no superfluity in your language. One pungent word will penetrate more deeply into the understanding, than a pointless word, which is barbed with two or three of a similar signification. Be a severe critic on your own compositions ; and expunge not only every word, but every sentence, and every paragraph, which is not to the purpose. This may render your sermons shorter ; but what you lose in mass you will gain in weight : and it will be most acceptable to your auditors ; because the attention

to a speculative discourse becomes painful, when it is too long continued.

As the doctrines, which you believe, ought to be conformable to reason, you should accustom yourself to a dispassionate method of treating them. Enthusiasm is as much out of place here, as it would be in the demonstration of a mathematical theorem. With whatever loudness of voice or vehemence of gesture a proposition may be announced, it cannot be proved, if one part of it contradicts another, or if it is indisputably opposed to any established truth. You will more readily convince the understanding of your hearers, and preclude the objections, which might arise in their minds, if you are moderate as well as calm: if you qualify one doctrine by another. There are propositions, which are true to a certain extent; but not true, if they are carried to an extreme.

In the present state of biblical science you have not much cause to expect, that you can make any new discoveries in the explanation of difficult texts. Light may occasionally break out, and the just meaning of a passage, which has hitherto been involved in obscurity, may be made evident to all reasonable minds: but aspire not to the honor of being the first, who shall dispel this darkness. Seek for truth and not for novelty. It is no objection against the interpretation of a text, that Grotius, or Locke, or Clarke maintained it, before you were born.

In fine, let the few speculative sermons, which you deliver, be concluded with a practical exhortation. Point out the connexion, which exists between the belief of true doctrines and godliness and holiness: and whilst you allow that many men, who espouse erroneous sentiments, do honor to the gospel by the sanctity of

their lives, at the same time show that it is not from their errors, but from the truths, which they mingle with them, this good effect has been derived. They believe in God, and in the essential doctrines of the gospel. They have built a house of precious materials on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone ; but they have, to their own discomfort, encumbered it with stubble, which in some measure excludes the light of heaven. When however this useless matter is removed, the building, which has been fitly framed together, will remain ; and it will appear to be, what it is in effect, a holy temple in the Lord.

II. The other kind of preaching relates to practice. This is the most difficult, but the most important part of your duty ; for by the confession of all Christians the principal design of preaching is to render men pious and holy.

As one good way of learning any art is to study the best models of that art, you will carefully peruse the practical discourses of the most eminent preachers, in particular those that are written in the English language ; in which there is more of truth and nature, of just views of human life, and of genuine pathos, and less of exaggeration and of turgid and heartless eloquence, than exist in the southern languages of Europe.

Beside sermons, read the works of piety and Christian morality, which establish duty on the most solid basis, and exalt it to the highest point ; where the glory of God illuminates the whole of the divine edifice, and disinterested love crowns the summit ; and where the various motives and associations, which gradually raise

the mind from the earth to the throne of the Eternal, are displayed in the light of day.

Study also your own heart. You will undoubtedly find there many germs of virtue, which demonstrate that it was planted by the hand of infinite wisdom and goodness; but you will also find there temptations to sin, and the beginnings of folly, and the remains of imperfection, which you possess in common with all other moral agents, who are in a state of probation. Describe yourself justly, and you will describe your fellow Christians.

Examine also the actions of other men; but look at the human beings, by whom you are surrounded, and not often at those, who inhabit distant regions. The character of the people of New England, with whom you are to pass your life, is in many respects entitled to praise. There is among them much of civility, of decency of behaviour, of neighborly offices, of public and private beneficence, of order and harmony in families, of attention to the education of children, of regard to religion, and of zeal in the cause of truth. Many of our men do honor to the towns and societies, of which they are members; and many of our women, by their discretion, fidelity, tenderness, and piety, are the glory of their husbands or parents. Whilst you acknowledge all this, forbear not to condemn the sins of the land. Inveigh not against the abominations of India, and the corruptions of the great cities of Europe, from which through the goodness of God we are happily exempt; but direct your attention to the vices, which obtrude themselves on your sight. I might proceed to specify these vices; but as they are obvious, it is unnecessary: it will be sufficient, if I say that they are not few in number, and that they will furnish you with subjects for many discourses.



Look also at the men of your own times, and not so much at those of a former age. Though the inhabitants of New England retain somewhat of the manners of their forefathers ; yet it is universally confessed, that changes have gradually taken place in their character. Our ancestors were a race of men, who were firm in their resolutions, and courageous in executing them ; who were sober in their lives, and pious in their conversation ; who had a due regard for the interests of learning, and an ardent zeal in the cause of what they believed to be evangelical truth. But they brought with them from the parent country many crude notions on law and religion ; their minds were filled with superstitious terrors ; they were too much disposed to lay stress on trifles ; and their conceptions of the sublime extent of the morality of the gospel, particularly of mutual toleration, were imperfect. For their faults an apology may be made ; and the amount of it is this, that they were two centuries younger than the present generation. We call them the ancients, and this term misleads us. It is true, that if they were now alive, they would be our elders ; but as they died before the light, which illuminates us, had diffused its beams on the church, they could not enjoy the benefit of this superior lustre. You should, my brother, contemplate their characters with the same satisfaction, with which a man of wisdom and virtue looks back on his childhood, when it was passed in innocence and diligence. He would not now be so far advanced in knowledge and goodness, if the early part of his life had been consumed in idleness and naughtiness. He made a proper beginning, which has rendered his subsequent progress more easy. In like manner are you and the other descendants of those, who first built towns,



and schools, and churches in New England, indebted to them for many of the commencements of your improvements in science and religion. But as no wise and good man ever thinks of making the glimmering notions of infancy the standard of his faith, or its imperfect conceptions of duty the rule of his moral practice; so ought you to conduct yourself with respect to those, who lived in the infancy of New England. You should say with the Apostle Paul. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things. Whilst you deem it improper to arrest the ascent of the mind at the point, to which our ancestors attained, you will exhort your hearers to imitate them in everything which is laudable. In the meantime you will cast your eyes carefully around, that you may discover what moral evils have sprung up in the present age. To them you will pay your principal attention; and you will exert yourself to eradicate them, wherever they appear.

Look also at the faults of the men of your own religious party, but not at the moral imperfections of the professors of different opinions. Whilst you may consistently with that love, in which the truth should always be spoken, combat what appears to you to be an error, you ought to remember, that a discourse, not of argument but reproach, which is hurled against a church of an opposite creed, and which, either with scorn or hatred, censures its supposed fanaticism, superstition, or bigotry, cannot benefit the church to which it is addressed; because it is not a candid Christian sermon, but a satirical invective against the absent; and its tendency is to produce in the minds of its hearers the very prejudice and bitterness, which it condemns. Observe only the con-

duct of your friends and adherents : If in anything they have done amiss ; if they have offended against the duty which they owe to God, to Jesus their Saviour, or to their fellow men, seriously and earnestly exhort them to offend no more.

It is not necessary that every practical sermon, which you preach, should be a reproof of sin : you may sometimes with salutary effect introduce subjects of commendation. Propose the example of good men, that you may excite the emulation of your hearers. There is in the sacred Scriptures one perfect character, of whom you cannot say too much, and whom you cannot extol too highly. Jesus of Nazareth was a man approved of God ; he constantly went about doing good ; and he always did those things, which pleased his heavenly Father. I exhort you to make him the frequent theme of your praise ; and let all your eloquence be exerted to fill the bosoms of your people with the love and gratitude, which they owe him for the transcendent blessings derived from his divine religion.

Hold up also to the eye of your people the example of the saints, whose lives are recorded in the Old and New Testaments, and who, though they were not free from human infirmity, were nevertheless distinguished for their faith, patience, and submission to the divine will ; for their zeal, charity, and devotion.

It may be also useful to describe the good men of later times ; and in a series of biographical discourses to give a body to those moral truths, which attract less attention, when they are proposed in too abstract a manner. There is in almost every human mind a love of narrative : it delights us in infancy ; it charms us in youth ; and it continues to interest us even in mature age. The

lives of such active, benevolent, and pious men, as Watts, Lindsey, and Howard, if they are delineated with truth, will afford not less instruction than pleasure.

In the progress of your ministry, you will have opportunities of approaching still nearer to the bosoms of your hearers. When God in his providence removes from your church a valuable member, you will feel it to be your duty to impart comfort to the mourning friends; and one of the sources of this comfort is a description of the virtues of the deceased. When a lovely woman in the bloom of life, is compelled by a consumption to yield her breath, you cannot forbear to praise her calmness and patience, and the entire resignation with which she submits to the will of God, and gives up the world and all its enjoyments. Again, when the head of a family, who is eminent for prudence, watchfulness, and kindness, who is a useful member of society, an honest man, and a rational, humble, and devout Christian, — is taken from his wife and children, who are deprived by his death of the cheerfulness, which was continually increasing under his affectionate eye, — you cannot fail to convince his surviving friends, by a faithful portrait of his excellent character, that he is worthy of their love and homage. Subjects such as these, if they are treated with discretion, and not too frequently, produce beneficial effects. They render the hearts of your people tender; and your sympathy binds them to you with the cords of love.

These are only specimens of the practical subjects, which may engage your attention. In truth these subjects are more numerous, than I am able to express. The difficulty is to find thoughts to fill up the outline;

the lucid order in which they should be arranged ; and the proper words, which should give them color and expression. To surmount this difficulty, I advise you to devote all the time, which you pass alone, and which is not employed in reading and devotion, to intense meditation. Whenever you walk, or ride, or work, let your mind be engaged in the composition of sermons. Waste none of your solitary moments in idle musing, or in framing schemes of impossible happiness. Think, as much as is possible, in words. Gather in your imagination an auditory about you, and conceive yourself as addressing them in a serious and animated exhortation. By this means, when you enter your study, and sit down to write, you will have little else to do, than to transfer to paper the words, which have been previously inscribed on your mind.

I conclude my address with this solemn charge : Whenever you meditate the subject of a discourse, consider yourself in the presence of a holy Being, to whom you are accountable for all your words. A belief, that his eye beholds you, will guard your mind against the intrusion of vain thoughts ; and it will lead you to reject the subjects, from which a profitable moral cannot be extracted, and which do not tend to promote the glory of God, and the interests of religion. In a word, be a devout Christian, and you will then be a zealous and edifying preacher. Whilst your meditations are accompanied with humble prayer to the Father of spirits, you will have reason to hope, that he will be graciously pleased to assist you in your sincere endeavors to write his law upon the tablet of your heart, and in your diligent search to find out acceptable words, by which you can impress it deeply on the hearts of your fellow men.

## APPENDIX.



## APPENDIX.

---

### A HOMILY OF THE FOURTH CENTURY.

#### DEUT. IV. 23.

##### TAKE HEED UNTO YOURSELVES.

THE sentence, which I have read, is often repeated in the writings of Moses. It is short, but full of meaning, and suggests a number of important ideas. My design is to attend to a few of them in the following discourse.

1. A great part of the sins which we commit, proceed from the indulgence of evil thoughts: to preserve us therefore against this danger, the Being who created us commands to take heed unto ourselves, to be constantly on our guard, and to maintain the purity of our minds. Where we are more prone to sin, there he bids us use the greater diligence and caution. The motions of the body require time, and are not performed without exertion: on the contrary, the motions of the mind are as rapid as light; impediments do not stop them. they are incapable of fatigue, and for them no time is out of season. With what carefulness then should we attend to our hearts, and restrain the velocity of our thoughts! A man may be outwardly virtuous, whilst inwardly his desires are hastening with swift motion to the abyss of sin. He who delights his imagination with impure images, or who allows a free course to the suggestions of envy, hatred, and revenge, has already vice busy within him. There may be no witness of his guilt, and he may even pass in the world for a man of virtue:

but the time will come, when the secret works of darkness will be revealed, and the counsels of the heart made manifest. Moses then in these words, teaches us, in the first place, not to indulge evil thoughts. We should not cherish in our hearts any hidden crime. Here the downward path to sin is steep: we have need therefore of all our caution.

2. Take heed unto yourselves. Every animal has received from its Maker that assistance, which is necessary for its preservation. The beasts, instructed by nature, shun what is noxious, and pursue what is salutary. To them God has imparted instinct as a guide; but on you he has conferred the more noble gift of reason. What they do without deliberation, you effect with mature consideration: you avoid sin, as they shun poisonous plants; you pursue virtue, as they seek after herbs which are edible. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, that you may distinguish between what is salutary and what is pernicious.

3. Take heed unto yourselves: that is, examine yourselves on every side: let the eye of your mind be watchful. You walk amidst perils; secret snares are laid for you in every place. Step therefore with caution; and look about you, as you proceed. Surely in vain is a net spread in the sight of any bird. Let not the birds excel you in sagacity; and suffer not yourselves to be snared in the net of the devil.

4. Take heed unto yourselves: that is, not to the objects, which are without you, but attend to yourselves, and to yourselves only; for the latter, and not the former, are of chief importance. What are properly ourselves are our minds, our bodies, and our senses. The objects without are wealth, arts, and the other appendages, and embellishments of life. This admonition therefore teaches you to take heed, that you do not immoderately pursue pleasure, riches, or popular applause. Do not so highly esteem the delights of this transitory existence, that through anxious thoughts about them you neglect the principal part of yourselves; but attend rather to your mind. Cleanse it from every spot of iniquity, which it may have contracted: ornament it with every virtue, polish it with every grace, which can render it lovely. Examine yourselves, what you are; endeavor to become acquainted with your own



nature : Your body is mortal ; but your mind, immortal. The life of the body passes quickly away ; but the life of the mind admits of no bounds. Take heed therefore to yourselves, that you do not prefer what is perishing to what is eternal. Think little of your body, which is transitory and frail ; but let your principal attention be paid to your immortal mind. Provide however, what is proper and useful for both ; for the body, food and clothing, health and strength ; for the mind, the rules of piety and goodness, chaste affections, and confirmed habits of virtue.

Take heed unto yourselves, that you do not pamper the body with luxury, which will obscure and impair the mind : for these two parts of man resemble the two arms of a balance : if you depress one scale, the other scale becomes light in proportion ; but by temperance the mind preserves its tone and strength, its activity and intelligence.

5. Physicians exhort them, who labor under any infirmity, to take heed to themselves, that they neglect not either their medicine or diet. In like manner, when we are infected with the malady of sin, the great physician of our souls heals them with the salutary warning, which he has given us in the text. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, that in proportion to the inveteracy of your disease, you may apply a remedy sufficient for the restoration of your health. Have you committed a great and grievous crime ? you have great need of confession, of contrition, of bitter tears, of strong resolutions of amendment, of humble and anxious vigilance, of continual fasting. Is your offence light and venial ? let your repentance at least be equal to it. But take heed to yourselves, that you may know whether your soul is in health or not : for many, who are afflicted with a dangerous disease, are so destitute of thought, that they are even ignorant that they are sick. This precept therefore, by making you acquainted with yourselves, will both heal them who are disordered, and confirm and strengthen them who are whole.

6. The admonition of the text also applies to every condition of human life ; for the great family of mankind is divided into many classes. Are you a traveller ? Pray to God with the Psalmist to direct your steps. Take heed to yourself, that

you turn not to the right hand nor to the left; but proceed directly on, in the way which leads to heaven. — Are you an architect? Let Jesus Christ be your substantial foundation; and build not with hay and stubble, but with stone, or other lasting materials. — Are you a husbandman? Sow good seed in your ground; and open its bosom to receive the fructifying doctrine, which descends like the dew; and let the bright sun of righteousness warm it with his beams. — Are you a soldier? Put on the whole armor of God. Let truth be your coat of mail, justice your breast-plate, faith your shield, salvation your helmet, and the word of God your sword. — Are you a merchant? Let not the balances of deceit be in your hand; but purchase the pearl of great price, which is found in the kingdom of heaven. — Are you a mariner? Look unto Jesus as your pole-star; let the divine Spirit fill your sails, the law of God be your helm, and hope your anchor; and when you go down to the sea in ships, and do business in the great waters, behold there the works of the Lord, and contemplate his wonders in the deep. — In fine, whatever your employment may be, take heed to yourselves, that you perform the duties of it with fidelity and alacrity.

7. Take heed unto yourselves: Be sober and moderate, discreet in managing your present affairs, and provident for a future day; so that you neither lose what you have in possession, and which is sufficient for your support, through sloth and carelessness; nor promise yourselves the certain enjoyment of what you have not, and perhaps never will obtain, as if it was already in your hands. This mental disease is common in those young persons, who through volatility of mind, think that they have already attained, what hope presumes. Whilst they lie on their beds, or take a solitary walk, their busy pencil paints in brilliant colors on the air the images of things, which never were and never will be. Fancy springs from the ground, and flies with rapid wings through the whole circle of bliss. They will pass their youth in pleasures; pleasures which will quickly succeed each other, and which will be without satiety. As soon as they appear, every one will be stricken with admiration. Their conversation will be sprightly and original; and all who hear them, will be delight-

ed with their wit and genius. They will possess every accomplishment, without the fatigue of acquiring it; and understand all arts, without the trouble of learning them. Wealth also will descend on them, not gradually, but in a golden shower. What then is to prevent them from building a superb edifice, adorned with the graces of Grecian architecture, and filled with costly furniture? Here they will be attended by a crowd of servants, all of whom will be faithful, and who will regard, not their own interest, but the interest of their master: and what is still more to be valued, they will be surrounded by their friends, whom they will sumptuously entertain: and in these entertainments there will be no trouble and disappointment: because everything being in place and season, all their guests will be satisfied. To these pleasures will succeed the highest civil honors which they can covet. The listening multitude will be charmed with their eloquence; their rivals, overcome by the superiority of their talents, will not dare to make their interfering claims, and all their fellow citizens will conspire to raise them to an exalted rank. In the meantime, however, the great blessing of human life, will not be wanting. They will form a matrimonial connexion with a woman, possessing every mental and bodily excellence, of an amiable temper, and of an honorable and opulent family. From the usual vexations and afflictions of the domestic state they will be exempt: their children will be beautiful, accomplished, obedient, and discreet; none of them will ever be sick, and none of them will die. They will thus pass on to old age, flowing in wealth, loaden with honors, and in the full enjoyment of felicity.

When the young amuse their fancy with these brilliant and empty images, so great is their infatuation, that they believe they enjoy what they wish, as if it was already present. But these imaginations are the disease of an idle mind, and nothing better than a waking dream. The admonition of the text will be of great use in repressing these swelling thoughts, and checking these impetuous flights. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, that you do not promise yourselves what probably you will never obtain; but improve the talents, which

are given to you, and be content with the moderate blessings, which you possess.

8. This precept also will be useful in restraining another improper spirit, which is common in the world. As too many persons are inclined to attend more to the concerns of others than their own, to prevent you from falling into the same practice, it says to you, Cease to inquire too curiously into the faults of another, nor with idle and unprofitable thoughts, busy yourselves in investigating the causes of his disease; but rather take heed unto yourselves, and diligently explore the state of your own hearts. There are not a few, who, as our Lord declares, can see a mote in the eye of a brother, whilst they cannot perceive a beam in their own eye. Take care therefore, that you do not omit diligently to examine your own conscience, whether the tenor of your life proceeds according to the commands of God: but look not with prying eyes about you, that you may find an occasion of censuring your brother, after the example of the arrogant Pharisee, who presumptuously pronounced himself better than other men, and looked down with contempt on the Publican. Ask yourselves, whether you do not cherish evil thoughts, whether you do not sometimes offend with your tongues, and whether your actions are pure: and if you can answer with truth, that you have frequently transgressed, which you probably can, as you are men, you will not hesitate to adopt the prayer of the Publican, God, be merciful to me a sinner?

9. Take heed unto yourselves. This exhortation will be beneficial to you in prosperity, and in adversity. On the one hand, it will prevent you from being puffed up with pride; and on the other, from sinking into a state of despondency.

Are you proud of your wealth? do you boast of the honorable ancestors from whom you are descended? are you vain of your beauty, or of your exalted rank? Take heed to yourselves, and remember that you are dust, and that you will return to dust. Think of them, who before you have performed a splendid part on the theatre of human life: where is the wise magistrate; the brave soldier; the eloquent orator; the captivating beauty? Are they anything but dust, anything but a fable? Is not all their glory reduced to a small heap

of bones? Look into their tombs, and see whether you can distinguish the master from the servant, the rich from the poor, the conqueror from the captive, the strong from the weak, the beautiful from the deformed. If you are mindful of your nature, you will not be elevated with pride.

On the other hand, are you depressed by the weight of calamity? do you live in poverty and obscurity? are you subjected to the insolence of the proud? Do not therefore be cast down; nor expel hope from your bosom, because you are in adversity: but rather reflect on the blessings, which God has already bestowed on you, and meditate on the felicity, which he has promised you in future. Remember that you are men, who are formed by the hand of God himself: that you are made in the image of your Creator. By the practice of piety and virtue, you can rise to a state of glory, not inferior to the glory of the angels. You are endowed with understanding and reason, by which you are capable of knowing God and of comprehending his works. Why then are you sorrowful? Is it because your apartment is not lighted up with wax tapers? but you have the sun, which through the whole day hangs out his golden lamp. Is it because the polished mirror does not reverberate their feeble splendor? but you have the moon, whose silver rays shine on you with reflected light. Can you not sleep except on down? On your hard bed your sleep is sweet, profound, and undisturbed by terrifying dreams. It is not given to you to repose under a painted ceiling; but you are covered with a magnificent canopy of celestial blue, vaulted with inexpressible art, and spangled with stars.

The favors, which I have now mentioned, are temporal; but how much more sublime are the blessings, which follow! For you God has appeared among men, imparted the gifts of the holy Spirit, abolished death, and filled you with the glorious hope of the resurrection. He has communicated precepts, by which you can become capable of imitating your Maker and attaining perfection. The kingdom of heaven is ordained, a crown of righteousness is prepared for you, if you persevere in virtue unto the end. If you take heed to your-

selves, you will discover these and many other important truths, which will console your hearts under every distress.

10. Whithersoever you direct your attention, the precept of the text will be in a high degree beneficial. For one more example, does anger overcome your reason? Are your inflamed passions ready to burst out in opprobrious words and barbarous deeds? if you take heed to yourselves, you will be enabled to calm your minds, to bridle your tongues, and to withhold your hands from him, who has provoked you to wrath.

Take heed therefore to yourselves and know, that you are composed of an intellectual and rational mind, and of affections and passions. It is for the former to command, and for the latter to obey. Never suffer your mind to be led captive by your affections; nor permit your passions to conquer your reason.

11. Finally, an accurate and diligent consideration of yourselves will lead you to the knowledge of God: for if you take heed to yourselves, you will require no other means to render you acquainted with your Maker. In yourselves, as in a world in miniature, you can contemplate the wisdom of the supreme Being. As you cannot see your mind with your corporeal eyes, but doubt not that it exists, so you will not doubt that God exists, although he is invisible. The mind cannot be painted as of any color, shape or size; but is known by its activity only: in like manner you cannot discern God with the eye, but you can apprehend him with the spiritual sense. Admire the wonderful art with which your Creator has constructed your mind, and in what close union he has connected it with your body. Observe how they mutually sympathize. Consider with what readiness your limbs obey the motion of your will. Inquire in what storehouses of the brain is deposited the knowledge, which you acquire; whence it is that new ideas do not exclude the ideas, which you before obtained; but that your memory preserves them all without confusion, and distributed into regular classes, as if they were engraved on brazen columns.

After this contemplation of your mind, take heed to yourselves, and observe with what admirable skill your body is con-

\* Vid. Ovid. Metamorph. I. 81 — 86.

stituted. See what an elegant habitation your great Creator has provided for your soul. To you only he has given an erect stature : whilst the eyes of other animals are fixed on the ground, you only look upward to heaven.\* Your head, in which the senses are placed, crowns the summit of your body. There are the sight, the hearing, the taste, and the smell. Their organs are near, that they may afford mutual assistance ; but whilst they are crowded into a narrow space, they do not interrupt each other. The eyes, shaded and adorned with the graceful brows, are seated in the upper part of the head, that they may command a more extensive prospect, and that no part of the body may intercept their view. The apertures of the hearing are placed on each side, consisting not of straight, but winding passages, which convey without danger the sounds, that are formed by the undulating air. The tongue is soft and flexible, and accurately adapted to the formation of the great variety of articulations, of which language consists. In this operation it is aided by the teeth, which guard it like a strong palisade. I might proceed to mention other parts of the human body : such as the lungs, so skilfully fitted for the respiration of the air : and the heart, the fountain of life : but time would fail me to enumerate all these wonders. I would conclude therefore the discourse with saying, that an attention to your frame will convince you of the existence of the Supreme Being : so that you will not forbear to exclaim with the Psalmist, I will praise thee, O Lord, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made : marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. — Take heed then to yourselves, and you will take heed to God : you will believe that he is infinitely powerful, infinitely wise, and infinitely good. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. — *Basil's Works*, I. 293. *Paris*, 1638.

\* Vid. Ovid. *Metamorph.*, I. 84 — 86.

† For this passage Basil was indebted to Cicero, as Ovid was before him. Vid. Cic. *De Natura Deorum*. II. 55, 56, 57.



## NOTE.

THE preceding discourse is an abridgement of one of the homilies of St Basil. This renowned father of the church, who is called Basil the Great, but who, in the opinion of Erasmus, was entitled to the surname of The Very Great, was created archbishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, A. D. 369. He was a strenuous opponent of the Arians, and of the emperor Valens himself, who patronized that sect. The ancients, particularly the two Gregories, and Jerom, and Theodoret, extol him in the highest terms of panegyric. Erasmus, Du Pin, Cave, and other modern writers, bestow on him not less extravagant praise. Their testimony may be found in Bleau's *Censura*, p. 170. I have room for nothing more than a short extract from Du Pin: "The eloquence of St Basil is sublime: his style pure, elegant, and persuasive: natural, flowing, and unaffected. There is no author, whose writings make a deeper impression on the heart; and it is impossible to read them, without feeling a love for virtue and a hatred against vice." Dr Priestley, in his *History of the Christian Church*, period x. sect. 3, supposes that Basil, Gregory of Naziansum, and Gregory of Nyssa, were the three fathers who carried the doctrine of the Trinity to its present height, by teaching that the Son is in all respects equal to the Father; in which opinion, says Priestley, they went further than Athanasius himself. But whilst Basil and his coadjutors completed the doctrine of the Trinity, they seem to have known little or nothing of several other points, which have been reputed orthodox in later times, and the invention of which was reserved for a future age. A similar observation may be made on many of their successors and predecessors among the Christian fathers. This fact has been acknowledged and lamented by modern authors. Thus Daillé complains of Chrysostom, who flourished about eighteen years after Basil, that "he appears to be ignorant of the doctrine of original sin; for he denies that sin is inherent in us by nature, and he affirms that infants are free from it; he gives also a weak interpretation of Rom. v.



1. By one man's disobedience many were made sinners ; — as in the Apostle meant to say, that by the offence of Adam men were subjected, not to sin itself, but to death." Daille, On the use of the Fathers, p. 273. Of Jerom, who was a few years later than Basil, Flaccius Illyricus, a Lutheran divine of the sixteenth century, says : " He was well skilled in the languages, and endeavored to explain the Scriptures by versions and commentaries ; but after all he was able to do very little, being ignorant of the human disease, and of Christ the physician, and wanting both the key of Scripture, and the Lamb of God to open it to him." A learned writer of the same period observes concerning Eusebius, bishop of Casarea, who flourished fifty years before Basil, that " it is a very low and imperfect description, which he gives of a Christian, making him only a man, who by the knowledge of Christ and his doctrine, is brought to the worship of the one true God, and the practice of sobriety, righteousness, patience, and other virtues. But he hath not a word about regeneration, or imputed righteousness." The same Flaccius, in one sweeping sentence, censures the whole body of fathers, who flourished at the beginning of Christianity : " The Christian writers, who lived soon after Christ and his Apostles, discoursed like philosophers of the law and its moral precepts, and of the nature of virtue and vice ; but they were totally ignorant of man's natural corruption, the mysteries of the gospel, and Christ's benefit." See Priestley's Hist. of the Corr. of Christianity, part ii. sect. 6. The three last quotations are derived from the Credibility of the Gospel History ; and Lardner subjoins to them : " Poor, ignorant primitive Christians ! I wonder how they could find the way to heaven. They lived near the times of Christ and his Apostles. They highly valued, and diligently read the holy Scriptures, and some of them wrote commentaries upon them ; but yet, it seems, they knew little or nothing of their religion, though they embraced and professed it with the manifest hazard of all earthly good things ; and many of them laid down their lives rather than renounce it. Truly we of these times are very happy in our orthodoxy ; but I wish that we did more excel in those virtues, which they, and the Scriptures likewise, I think, recommend, as the distinguishing properties

of a Christian. And I am not a little apprehensive, that many things which now make a fair show among us, and in which we mightily pride ourselves, will in the end prove weeds only, on which the owner of the ground sets no value." From the specimen, which is given in this abridgement of St Basil's topics and his manner of treating them, it is evident that he is entitled to his share of the censure, which has been thrown on the primitive fathers for their want of orthodoxy. With the exception of a few doctrines, he might be classed among the liberal preachers of the present age: his discourses are moral and practical.

In the abridgement, the introduction of the discourse and several other passages are omitted, not because they contain anything different from the paragraphs which are preserved, but merely for the sake of accommodating the homily to the prevailing taste for short sermons. I have been careful however to retain the passages, relating to doctrines which are the subjects of controversy among Christians, and which they who espouse them would confirm by the authority of St Basil: such as, "God appeared among men:" "Sinners are tempted by the devil:" "They, who have committed great crimes, stand in need of confession and of continual fasting." In sect. 6, for the hunter, the shepherd, and the professor of the athletic art, whom Basil addresses, is substituted the mariner. In sect. 7, the language is somewhat more diffuse than in the original homily.















32271

252J

Freeman, J.

F877

Sermons and charges.

252J

F877

32271

